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To review how a school's vision creates its brand identity

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To review how a school's vision creates its brand identity

JON BABER

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

APRIL 2008

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ABSTRACT

A consequence of the 2005 Government White Paper on Education was the apparent continuation of the marketisation of education in England. As a result, it would appear that the need for schools to be able to market themselves within this culture was becoming more and more important. One of the key elements of an effective marketing strategy is the notion of 'brand'. Consequently, this study explores the concept of brand within the environment of Primary education in the UK. In particular, it investigates the importance of an effective vision for generating a notion of brand within the school and the effects that this manifests.

The research is conducted by using an Action Research methodology in which the researcher also assumed the role of consultant. This presented many potentially conflicting situations particularly with a view to maintaining validity and reliability. It was done by carrying out a sixteen month investigation into brand development within a primary school in the south-east of England. The results were obtained by a combination of ongoing data collection, questionnaire responses from school staff and interviews with a representative group of school staff.

The focus of the research was potentially vast but was narrowed to an investigation of the relationship between vision and brand, the main component aspects of embedding a brand and an investigation into the effects of this on school staff. As a result, a model was developed to summarise the findings and present a potential methodology for subsequent research and development.

The main findings were that a focus on brand development within the school, through the promotion and development of an effective vision, led to a greater sense of unity within the school staff, greater levels of staff engagement and motivation and a more positive atmosphere within the school.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 - Overview

In order to present a coherent framework for this research enquiry, this chapter introduces the area of research to be investigated and provides an initial rationale for this decision. In short, this chapter will focus on:

- The problem to be investigated.
- Why it is useful to discuss this issue now.
- A simple definition of brand.
- A breakdown of what specifically is to be researched.
- Personal reasons for developing this research.
- The methodological approach adopted for this research.
- The research time-table.
- Information about the school where the research took place.
- A chapter synopsis of this research.

1.2 - The problem to be investigated

The 2005 Government White Paper entitled 'Higher standards, better schools for all' (DfES, 2005) gives a clear indication of the present government's intentions for the English education system. It highlights four key areas that the government intends to focus on for the immediate future and these are the development of a new school system, improving choice and access for all, having parents and pupils fully engaged in improving standards and providing education that will be tailored to the individual. This White Paper continues with the trend of marketisation within the English education system that began as a result of the 1988 Education Reform Act. This trend changed an operating ethos within the English education system that, according to Bush (1999), had an attitude of

‘Parents: leave your children here’ to one where external relationships were far more prevalent in headteacher’s thinking. This fact is reflected by the National Association of Headteachers who have said:

‘Schools can no longer operate in isolation. The expectations of society, whether expressed by single parents, identified groups, or government legislation, mean that schools need to be aware of views being expressed. They must take account of the public perceptions of how well they are performing and be prepared to respond to those articulated concerns which are genuinely representative’ (Quoted in Bagley, Woods and Glatter, 1996: 125)

As such, the White Paper will present significant challenges for schools throughout the country. It also provided the initial interest in this arena of research and gave me cause to investigate how schools will cope with the demands made on them by the proposed initiatives. My hypothesis was that for schools to succeed within this climate of market driven education reform, they will need to develop a strong sense of identity and image to promote themselves effectively. In short, they will need to develop their own unique brand. But are schools able to do this? Are they already doing this? Do they know how to market themselves effectively in line with a brand image? My initial thoughts were that schools did not have the inherent skills to do this and I began to sketch out a research plan to investigate this further.

1.3 - Why it is useful to discuss this issue now

As mentioned previously, the 2005 White Paper on Education had 4 main elements: the development of a new school system, improving choice and access for all, having parents and pupils fully engaged in improving standards and providing education that will be tailored to the individual. These elements will now be analysed in a little more depth.

Developing a new school system

This aspect of the White Paper aims to provide improvements that will be 'embedded and sustaining within schools because the changes will be owned and driven by schools and parents' (DfES, 2005: 2). Thus, the idea is to provide schools with the opportunity to free themselves from bureaucratic control and become far more self-managing. To do this, the White Paper proposes initiatives such as every school will be able to acquire a self-governing trust, academies will remain at the heart of the education programme, independent schools can enter this system and a national Schools Commissioner will drive the change. Thus, the overall thrust of this proposal will lead to schools becoming more autonomous and self-governing with far greater powers given to head-teachers and their Boards of Governors.

Improving choice and access for all

The range of proposals within this category aims to increase the availability of information to parents so that they can make informed choices about which school they wish their children to attend. Initiatives proposed here include introducing better information for all parents and having dedicated choice advisers to help the least well-off parents, extending the right to free school transport to children from poorer families to their three nearest secondary schools (within a 6 mile radius), and making it easier for schools to introduce banding into their admissions policies. This range of proposals is therefore geared to making parental choice a key factor in the development of the education system. By association, school standards are suggested to improve as schools with good records will be applied for by parents; those that under-perform will be undersubscribed and may, ultimately, be closed. This initiative will, by association, provide an overtly competitive arena within the education system.

Having parents and pupils fully engaged in improving standards

The government wants to continue with its development of pupil-level data to assist both parents and teachers in the development of each child's education. To this end, it proposes that parents will receive meaningful reports about their children during the academic year with opportunities to discuss their child's progress with teachers. Also, parents will have the chance to form Parent Councils whose role it will be to influence school decisions and parents will have a better local complaints procedure and a new national complaints process (through Ofsted) to be used when local procedures have been exhausted. Finally, parents will be able to set up new schools supported by a dedicated capital pot. Thus, the education process will be more reliant on the involvement of parents as allies to the teaching professionals.

Education will be tailored to the individual

The Government intends to use the 'expanded knowledge base about how different young people acquire knowledge and skills' (DfES, *ibid*: 4) to provide more tailored schooling for children. This will be supported by improved resources and greater availability of ICT. Initiatives within this section of the White Paper include targeted one to one tuition in English and Maths in schools with underperforming pupils, more stretching lessons and opportunities for gifted and talented children, more grouping and setting by ability and a national training programme to enable each school to have one leading professional to help develop tailored lessons.

All the above measures will be supported by distinct measures against schools who are underperforming and greater freedom for schools who are performing to the standard required. This will, in turn, necessitate a change in role for local authorities where they will become 'commissioners' rather than 'providers' (DfES,

ibid: 7). In particular, they will have a 'new duty to promote choice, diversity and fair access to school places' (DfES, ibid: 7). The net effect of all of these measures would be to increase the notion of marketisation within the English education system. This concept will be reviewed in more depth in the Literature Review of this research enquiry but it is important to point out at this stage that such a process is heavily reliant on two main theoretical assumptions. The first of these assumptions is that such a policy involves less direct state control and allows more individual freedom to operate within it. Thus, the notion of choice is paramount to any market-led policy. The second of these assumptions is that the marketisation of education has to, by association, increase the amount of competition within the process and this will, in turn, drive standards up.

It is my conclusion, based on the above, that for schools to operate effectively within this structure they will have to attract students to them otherwise they may not receive sufficient funding to operate. They will only attract students if they are delivering a service that meets the expectations of their customers (in this case, parents). This will be judged, on the whole, by examination success. But, government policy suggests that all schools need to achieve a minimum standard in terms of examination success and so, in a few years, time, this may not be the main criteria for deciding where to send children. When all other factors are equal, though, what will make their proposition more compelling than the school next door? How will they promote themselves to their potential customers and attract new students to their schools?

To operate within a market based system, surely the schools will need to operate with a market based strategy? In the commercial world, such a strategy has been focussed on the development and reinforcement of brand and brand image. I was interested to discover, therefore, whether the principles used by commercial organisations to develop a sense of brand could apply to schools in England and what would be the effects of this? This became the focus of my

research and was deemed timely as it linked to an issue schools are wrestling with at the time of writing.

1.4 - A simple definition of brand

If my study is to be linked to the notion of brand, it makes sense to have a working definition of this concept so that the research can have some form of framework and focus to it. In my opinion, one of the best definitions of a brand is the one created by Gardner and Levy (2003: 27) who say:

'It is a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes. It tells the consumer many things, not only by the way it sounds but, more important, via the body of associations it has built up and acquired as a public object over a period of time'.

In simple terms, this definition has been refined as 'a product is something that is made in a factory; a brand is something that is bought by a consumer' (Miller and Muir, 2004: 4). Thus, a brand has two defining attributes and these are:

A brand is the result of behaviour. Brands are judged by their actions and not just their advertising – for a consumer, a single bad experience will unravel the most carefully spun brand. Everything, therefore, an organisation does has the potential to either reinforce or destroy a brand. The culture of the organisation needs to be aligned to the brand to produce the most powerful experience for its stakeholders.

A brand exists only in people's minds. It is the people within organisations who bring brands to life – not products. Brands are found not in organisational policies or strategy documents, but in the minds of consumers and producers alike. The brand is a 'public object' – the strongest brands are those which have developed a strong sense of ownership (Miller and Muir, *ibid*: 5).

Thus, a brand in the context of this research will be the unique offering that a school can present to its students and other key stakeholders (such as parents and teaching staff). It can be defined as a combination of the focus, behaviours and values of the school and the methods through which these are reinforced and promoted. These, will combine to give the school its brand image and will serve to differentiate it from other like schools in the area.

It is also important to note at this stage the 'branding' process to be researched will link purely to the internal dynamic of this process. Therefore, the research will focus on those attributes that will happen within the organisation to establish the notion of brand within it. The research will not review the external dynamic of this process in terms of how it is positioned and marketed to the world outside of the school. This differentiation will be explored in more depth in the Literature Review.

1.5 - A breakdown of what specifically is to be researched

In order to produce a literature review along with a theoretical framework for the research itself, I needed to fully understand the rationale of the research focus as well as defining its actual purpose. Coleman and Briggs (2003: 115) state that 'the purpose of research is trying to make a claim to knowledge, or wisdom, on the basis of systematic, creative, and critical enquiry'. On this basis, they go onto to say that such research has to have a distinct focus to it for it to be credible. This can either be 'a research hypothesis to be tested, or as a research problem to be tackled, or as a research issue to be explored' (Coleman and Briggs, *ibid*: 115).

In the case of this research, a 'Research Issue' was used as the dominant philosophy for defining the purpose. Although this is probably the least defined purpose of research out of the three presented above, it gives a lot more

flexibility in design and process. This theoretical position aligns to the fact that, within the sphere I am researching, there is little, if any, previous research or hypotheses. Thus, the research question that I was going to focus my attention towards was to answer the question: 'Could a brand identity be established in a Primary school in England?'

This research question presents several key themes that can be developed for further exploration and from which my overall aim was drawn. Firstly, I wanted to look at the process for establishing a brand within a school setting. Secondly, I wanted to review the impact of this and finally I wanted to confine my research to work within a Primary School. The reason for the latter point was I knew I had access to a suitable Primary School for the conduct of this research and so this initially drove my decision. Also, the size of the Primary school used meant that the research I wished to conduct would be more manageable and would allow me an appropriate opportunity to conduct an in-depth study to reveal the process of establishing a brand. From this research question, I developed the overall aim of my research which was:

'To review how a school's vision creates its brand identity'

The aim was developed and refined as a result of my Literature Review that linked the notion of vision to brand and, subsequently, gave me my ultimate destination in terms of research. However, this was still too vague in order to fully produce a refined piece of credible research. I therefore had to break this aim down into several objectives that would help give more structure to my research. This process is known as operationalization and is discussed next.

1.6 - Using 'operationalization' to focus the research

Having produced an overall aim for this research, it was subsequently important to break this question down into more specific or manageable sections. This

process is known as 'operationalization' (Cohen et al, 2003: 75). Within this process, the overall research question has to be broken into smaller areas for discussion and review. Thus, this allows the research to move 'from the general to the specific, from the abstract to the concrete' (Cohen et al, ibid, 75). Within the context of my research, the research purpose was broken down into four main objectives:

- To identify and explain the link between a school's vision and its operating ethos.
- To identify and explain a framework that makes a vision effective from a behavioural perspective.
- To identify and explain the effects of the process in terms of behavioural response.
- To identify and explain the impact of the vision on the school.

These objectives presented a more coherent framework from which to develop the research. They still left their respective fields quite wide, though, in terms of research and analysis. Therefore, it was appropriate to define these objectives even further into research questions. This process was carried out once I had fully concluded my Literature Review. The questions produced then helped shape the focus of my final research design.

Thus, the process followed thus far has allowed this research to have both focus and structure. This means that the research has moved from 'an expression of interest into a series of issues that lend themselves to being investigated in concrete terms' (Cohen et al, ibid: 76). The net effect of this is that it subsequently allowed me to select the appropriate methodology and research instruments in order to answer these questions and, therefore, present a more robust piece of research and learning.

1.7 - Personal reasons for developing this research

As well as external factors that influenced my decision to pursue this piece of research, such as timeliness and appropriateness, there were also several personal reasons why I chose this particular research focus. Firstly, I have been working as an organisational development consultant for the past six years and a large proportion of my work has been with organisations reviewing their work around leadership, cultural change and team development. Of particular interest during the past two years was work I carried out with Orange, Norwich Union and Volkswagen Group (UK) Limited in the creation, promotion and reinforcement of their brand values. The simple philosophy behind these pieces of work was that the organisations concerned wanted to make their brands more effective in terms of promotion and engagement – both to their customers and employees alike.

When I saw the initial proposals of the 2005 White Paper on Education, my thoughts were directly linked to the work outlined above. It seemed to me that what the government wanted was for schools to be far more effective at managing and marketing themselves. The four main aims of the Paper were all geared to producing autonomous institutions that succeeded or failed on their own merits. Within this, there had to be a substantial element of marketing and, consequently, brand development. Thus, I saw an opportunity to link my area of commercial expertise into a school scenario and test out some of the techniques I had used in a commercial environment within a school context.

It also appeared to me that no-one else was taking this approach to the subject. There was an abundance of theoretical discussion about the ethics and theory of a market-led education system but very little practical help or advice for head-teachers trying to cope in this increasingly challenging scenario. I therefore wanted to research and develop a model that may be of use to educational practitioners and assist them to navigate the demands of the present English

education system. Finally, I wanted to work within an area that would aid my development as a practitioner within the field of learning and development. Although the majority of my work is done in the commercial sector, I wanted to use this piece of research to help me expand my knowledge of an area that is growing in importance in terms of focus and development. The work carried out in this research will deepen my understanding of this subject and allow me to apply this learning on future projects.

1.8 - The methodological approach adopted for this research

Due to the nature of this study, I decided that an Action Research methodology would be used. Action Research as a process was largely driven by Kurt Lewin (1948) who wanted to not only understand the world but change it. Thus, he created a research process that combined Action (getting things done) with Research (understanding them better). The scope of it as a process is vast with Cohen et al (2000: 226) arguing that:

‘Action Research may be used in almost any setting where a problem involving people, tasks and procedures cries out for solution, or where some form of change results in a more desirable outcome’.

They go on to say that Action Research can be used to study areas as diverse as teaching methods, learning strategies, evaluative procedures, attitudes and values, continuing professional development, management and control and administration (Cohen et al, ibid, 226). This view is supported by Kemmis and McTaggart (1992: 16) who say:

‘Action Research is concerned equally with changing individuals on the one hand and, on the other, the culture of the groups, institutions and societies to which they belong’.

However, there is no simple definition of Action Research which covers all of its potential uses. Kemmis (1997) proposes that there are several different types of Action Research and these all have their own definition and bias. Some of these approaches are reflected in table 1.1 (below) that I have compiled from a selection of authors.

Author	Definition
Corey (1953: 6)	A process in which practitioners study problems scientifically so that they can evaluate, improve and steer decision-making and practice.
Hopkins (1985: 32)	A form of disciplined enquiry in which a personal attempt is made to understand, improve and reform practice.
Carr and Kemmis (1986: 162)	A form of 'self-reflective enquiry' undertaken by participants to improve understanding of their practices in context with a view to maximizing social justice.
Cohen and Manion (1994: 186)	'A small scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention'.

Table 1:1 - Different definitions of Action Research

These definitions seem to fall on a continuum that proposes that Action Research either is designed to improve practice rather than produce knowledge or that it is a method to produce 'real' educational theories that allow us to understand situations more clearly. Kemmis (1997: 177) describes these positions as 'reflective practitioners' and 'critical theorists'. On this continuum, Action Research also can be viewed as situational (it diagnoses a problem and attempts to solve it), collaborative (since it requires the efforts of researchers and practitioners), participatory (in that researchers take part in the implementation of the findings) and self-evaluative (it involves a constant evaluation of its process and modifications to adjust research and practice) (Sarantakos, 2003: 111). For the purpose of my study, I intend to use the definition proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988: 5) who said:

‘Action Research is a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out.’

This definition serves the purpose of my enquiry as it emphasises the involvement of the participants in affecting change as well as linking this change to the actual situation (or culture) they find themselves in. It also links with the perceptual position of Action Learning described by Dewar and Sharp (2006: 221) who said that it is a practice ‘for the systematic development of knowing rooted in experience, which has the clear purpose of creating new forms of knowing....It is research in practice, not on practice’. The core principles of Action Research used in the Research Enquiry will be discussed further in the chapter concerning research methodology.

1.9 - The research time-table

The research time-table comprised of four discrete phases and these phases are represented by table 1:2 below:

PHASE	DATES	DETAILS
1	April 2005 – August 2005	Positioning of the enquiry. Investigatory research.
2	September 2005 – mid-July 2006	Ongoing work with school. General data collection and reflexive analysis.
3	Late July 2006	Focussed data collection. Interviews and questionnaires.
4	August 2006 – April 2007	Interpretation of research. Completion of research enquiry.

Table 1:2 – the research time-table

Thus each of these phases involves a specific focus of research. This can be expanded upon as follows:

Phase 1

In this phase the focus was on making sure the proposed research was credible and merited further work. It combined working with the case study school to establish the aims and objectives of the research and gain support for the overall process. It also allowed the researcher to produce a literature review which enabled him to produce a more focussed research proposition. Thus, by the end of this phase I wanted to make sure I fully understood the subject matter due to be researched, had a full grasp of the process I wanted to use, a clear rationale of why this was the most effective way, had the full support of the school to do this and gained sponsorship from the school for the time and involvement of the school staff in this. A lack of time spent on this positioning phase would have resulted in the subsequent research potentially becoming disjointed and unfocussed. This, subsequently, would not have allowed me to fully utilise the opportunity at my disposal.

Phase 2

This phase allowed me to work alongside the school staff and assist them in the integration of the school vision into their daily routine. During this phase, data was collected to allow for a historic review of the process used to be established. It also allowed me a chance to collect my own thoughts and field-notes as part of a reflexive process. The net result of this was that the journey the case study school undertook during this period was clearly recorded to prevent bias and misinterpretation at a later stage.

Phase 3

The purpose of this was to begin to establish key trends and reactions to the process used. This provided the data to enable me to establish the consequences of the process used and the subsequent effect it had. It also

allowed me to use a variety of techniques to triangulate the data which, in turn, produced a more reliable result.

Phase 4

This final phase allowed me to condense all of the data collected into a format which was worthy of presentation to and further observation by other agencies. As such it became my platform to present my results, thoughts and findings that could be used by other schools who want to learn from this experience. It also allowed me to present my findings in a way that promoted ideas for further research and, additionally, further action on behalf of the case study school.

The time-table and Action Research

This 4 phase research time-table also allowed me to stay within the guidelines offered by Altricher (2005: 12) for effective Action Research. His 4-stage model, discussed in Section 3, proposed that any Action Research project had 4 distinct stages: data collection, analysis and interpretation, a discussion of the consequences and the promotion of further action. My time-table of research has allowed me to do this effectively.

1.10 - Information about the case study school

One of the primary concerns within any research project is to make sure an appropriate environment is made available through which the research can be conducted. In this case, I was lucky that I had access to a Group 3 Catholic Primary School situated in the south-east of England. It is positioned in a large town with a population of approximately 250,000 people. This town has over 50 other Primary Schools situated within it and this total includes 4 other Catholic Primary Schools. The school itself is situated within a large residential estate that has two other Primary schools linked to its catchment area.

As background information to this school, it is worth noting that, at the time of the research process, there were 422 pupils on the school roll aged between 3 to 11 and of a mixed intake. This included 61 part-time pupils who attended the nursery. In 2000, the school expanded into a two form entry and this process was due to be completed by the end of 2006. The school was re-categorised from Combined to Primary after a change in the age of transfer. There were currently no plans for the school to become 'specialist'. The School Governors intended to explore this aspect further in autumn 2006.

Most children transferred to a local Catholic Secondary School although a few went to two local grammar schools. There was a close link between the Primary School and the Catholic Secondary School through liaison group curriculum meetings. In addition, the Primary School had close links with the other 4 Catholic Primary Schools in the local area where the school was involved in joint coordinator groups at Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This allowed them to share aspects of good practice and development.

The pupils came from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The majority of parents were in employment although an increasing number were from single parent or divorced families (57 families). There were 38 pupils (9.5% as at April 2006) eligible for Free School Meals. A combination of PLASC Data and Fischer Family Trust Data presents the fact that 29.6% of the pupils were not from white British family ethnic groups; 38 pupils were on roll for whom their First Language was not English. Support for this challenge has been sought from EMASS. There were 7 pupils in the school with a Statement of Special Educational Needs and a further 42 were on the SEN Register. This gave a total of 49 pupils out of 361 in the school (13.5%). There were a high percentage of Catholic pupils on the roll (93%).

The school was built in 1978 and the older classrooms were now very small compared with those built at a later date. The school has almost doubled in

capacity during this time. There were plans to extend the school even further and funding has been allocated for this. Work was due to begin on this in January 2007. At the moment of writing, much of the school was inadequate for role (School SEF, 2006).

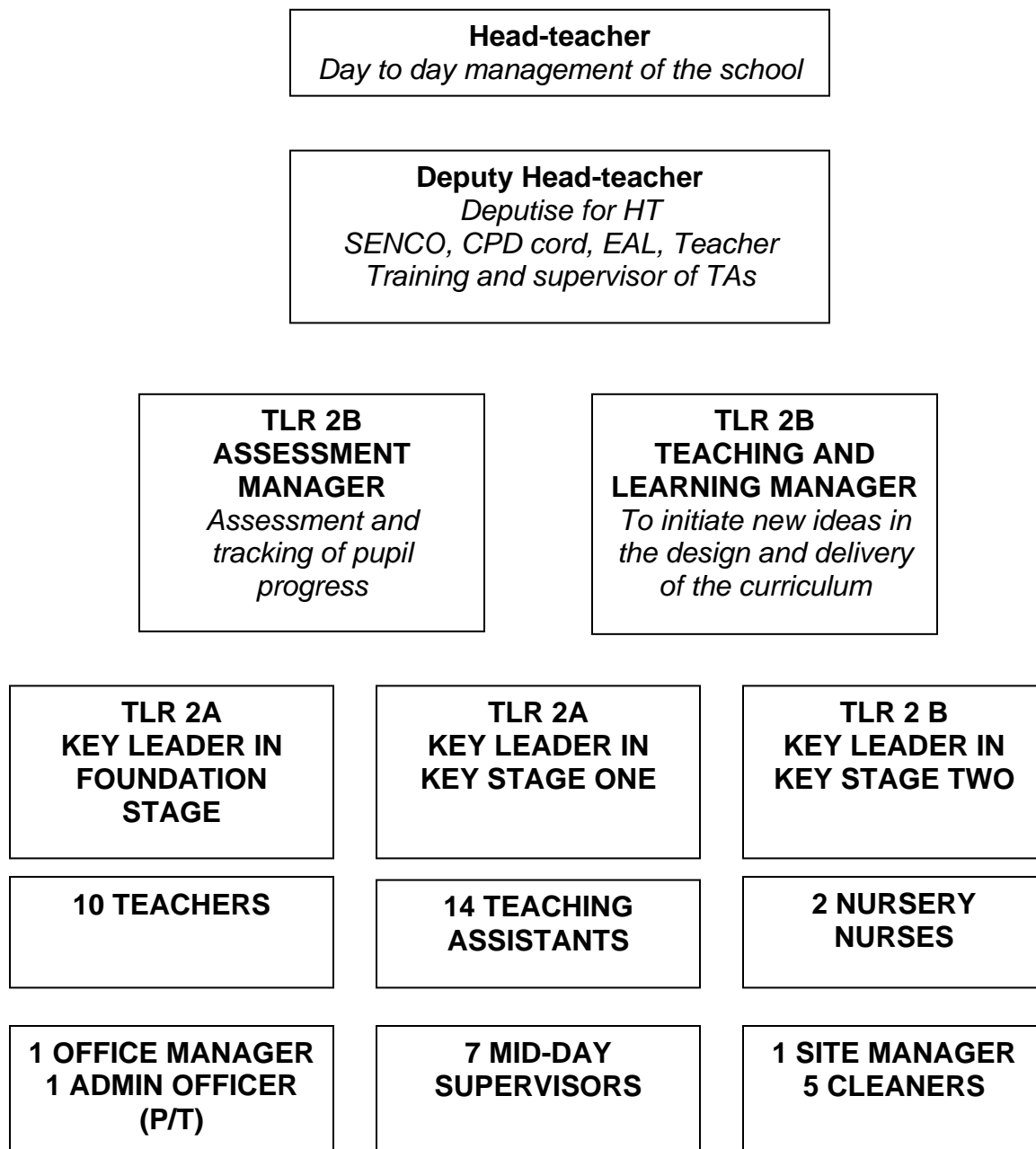


Table 1:3 - The school staffing structure (as at September 2005)

The head-teacher took up his role in January 2005 following the retirement of his predecessor who had served for 13 years. From September 2006 the school was to be re-organised to create a post of bursar/business manager and to make the Deputy Head-teacher a non-teaching post. The format of the staffing structure as at September 2005 is shown in table 1.3 on the previous page. There have only been 5 staff resignations in the past 3 years – two teachers due to maternity, one teacher relocated and one nursery nurse and one Teaching Assistant (both of whom are re-training). There were currently no vacancies at the school; the first time for 5 years. The School Governors were committed, enthusiastic and had a good grasp of their role. This was a significant improvement since the last Ofsted Inspection (School SEF, 2006).

The School was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2001 when it was described as follows (Ofsted, 2001, p7):

‘(The School) is good at developing the basic skills in literacy, numeracy and science and offers a satisfactory education overall.’

Overall, the case study school was not currently a high-performing school. Its SATs Scores demonstrated a less than average performance in both English and Mathematics. The SATS results for the school in September 2005 were as follows (Guardian, 2005):

Primary school performance

Published eligible pupil number	34
--	-----------

Pupils achieving Level four (Government's expected standards)

Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 in English	68%
--	------------

LEA average	72%
--------------------	------------

Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 in Mathematics	68%
--	------------

LEA average	69%
Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 in Science	85%
LEA average	84%
Average point score	26.9

Aggregate score

Aggregate across the three core subjects: 2005 221

Value Added: Pupils' improvement

7 - 11: 98.4

Absence

4.8% authorised (4.8% locally, 5.0% nationally)

Table 1:4 - SATS scores for the case study school (2005)

As well as this education performance, it faced challenges in relation to resources, facilities, integration of SEN and EAL pupils and pupils from varied socio-economic backgrounds. It therefore, in my opinion, represented a Primary School which presented many of the issues shared by Primary Schools across England. It was therefore deemed worthy as a case study school for the purpose of this research.

One point of note is the fact that the school is a Catholic faith school. I am not a Catholic and have no religious prejudice at all. The school was chosen because of its current performance level and because access was available to it. It is not my intention during this research to compare the performance of faith with non-faith ones.

1.11 - A chapter synopsis of this research

This research enquiry has been divided into four main chapters. A synopsis of each will now be presented:

Chapter 2 – a literature review

This chapter focuses on ascertaining current thinking about the subject of brands and the development of a market based ideology within education sector. It is divided into two sections with the first section focussing on research pertinent to the education sector. In particular, I want to look at any research relevant to the marketisation of education, how schools market themselves, how parents choose the schools that their children attend and any research relative to schools and brands. The second section deals with the subject of branding itself. I want to find out what work had been carried out that was pertinent to this research and linked the practical application into an organisation in order to develop its brand. From this review, the final framework for the research proper can be established and the aim reinforced and research questions finally developed.

Chapter 3 – the research design

This chapter focuses on such aspects as the methodology of the research: what was the stance taken and why? It therefore presents arguments for the processes utilised and discusses the design issues encountered. It also presents a view of how these were dealt with.

Chapter 4 – the research findings

This chapter provides a detailed account of the research findings linked to the original research questions. It uses a combination of media to do this and will

present a detailed account of the findings drawn from the 16 months of the research process.

Chapter 5 – a discussion of the findings

This chapter presents an analysis of the findings and seeks to review trends and learning from the research process. It concludes with a model of brand development that will be presented and discussed. This model will be based on the process used, developed and analysed during this study.

2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

I have divided the literature review into two very distinct sections. The first of these will look at work connected with the development of educational policy that gives rise to the idea of a market-led education system. This will encompass a theoretical overview of the subject as well as a look at the historical development of the market-based system in the English education system. This review will ultimately reveal some of the arguments and issues transcending from these previous areas of research.

The second part of the literature review is to provide a definition of what 'brand' actually is and how it might be applied to the world of education. There are many contrasting views about the notion of brand with nearly all of them stemming from the business world. The point of this second section, therefore, is to reveal some of the aspects of brand research and theory that align to the issues previously uncovered in Section 1 of this Literature Review. It is my belief that there will be a range of facets of brand, brand image and brand development that might be relevant and would ultimately help shape the development of my research enquiry.

Thus, at the end of this literature review, I will have presented enough salient information to help me define the actual problem, produce a rationale for this study in educational terms, discuss the ways I could have approached the problem and, finally, revisit my aim and objectives to present a clear starting point for the research. At the end of this chapter, therefore, I am able to present the key research questions that will be answered as a result of this study.

2.1 Section 1 – The development of a market based education system

The main thrust of this study is to investigate how primary schools will cope with a market based education system as promoted by the 2005 White Paper on

Education. As a starting point for this Literature Review, therefore, it seemed appropriate to discuss how this concept of educational policy has developed and the core principles that define it. Such policy is associated with the concept of Neoliberalism or the New Right and it is this area of educational policy that will be reviewed first. After that, I will review development of a market-led education system, critically analyse such a system and then review current research about the ways schools market themselves. Finally, the concept of parental choice linked to a market based education system will be discussed.

2.1.1 - The development of Neoliberalism or the New Right

The concept of Neoliberalism is also associated with that of the New Right and, for the purposes of this study, they shall be viewed as essentially equivalent. Within western nations, the concept represents a broad alliance of liberal and conservative interests. As such, groups who align to these policies tend to support an expanded market and a reduction in public provision. This definition is supported by Levitas (1986: dustcover) who says that:

'The New Right....is not a monolithic entity. The term may be applied to a wide range of ideologies and groups which support free market, anti-welfarist, or socially authoritative policies'.

Thus, supporters of the New Right tend to share a basic commitment to individual liberty and lobby for a 'reduced state'. This means that they share one central defining feature that can be described as 'a qualitative shift in both policy and ideology against government intervention, which was condemned as collectivist, socialist and economically misguided' (Levitas, *ibid*: 3).

This concept is reinforced by a second tenet: that of the assumed superiority of market mechanisms to ensure both economic prosperity and individual freedom. The ideology is based on an ideal that 'market forces should be allowed to

operate as widely as possible within a social order that is understood to be capable of almost self-regulation' (Olssen et al, 2004: 137). Through this process, a model is developed where every transaction is played out for personal gain. In short, this creates a way of operating where entrepreneurial thinking is the main factor contributing to success.

These core ideologies therefore give rise to the fact that New Right thinking tends to share many presuppositions which are that subjects are economically self-interested, that competitiveness is a mechanism for quality and efficiency and that governments should rule from a distance through devolved management. They also suggest that there should be a reduction of state services through privatization via user charges, contracting out, vouchers etc, that individuals are the best judges of their interests and needs, that a 'flexible', that is deregulated, labour market provides the same opportunities for people to utilize their skills and that free trade and open economies are required prerequisites for economic growth. Finally, to allow all of this to happen, tariffs, subsidies and controls of foreign investments or markets should be abolished (Olssen et al, *ibid*:138). Such thinking could have a profound effect on any education system and this potential impact will be reviewed next.

2.1.2 - The development of a market-led education system

The 2005 Government White Paper on education entitled 'Higher standards, better schools for all' (DfES, 2005) can clearly be seen as an extension of previous New Labour policies to develop the English education system into a market led process. Such a policy can be traced back to the 1988 Education Reform Act that was put in place by the then Conservative government. This Act, it has been argued (Ball, 1990) was largely influenced by the work of Friedrich A Hayek, an early pioneer of New Right thinking. In his work, *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960), Hayek proposes that policy and planning for social and economic advancement should be replaced by a free-market economy. Such a market

would produce a 'spontaneous, unplanned but orderly social structure based on mutually beneficial exchanges and the mechanism of price, without deliberate organisation by a commanding intelligence' (Hayek, 1960: 154). According to Hayek, such a market is fair because it has no morals and no intentionality but he readily admits that it also unequal. Ball (1990: 3) says that, in this instance, 'inequality is not only inevitable but necessary in the market in order to provide differential rewards which will stimulate competition and produce incentives'. Thus, with these principles in mind, citizenship is reduced to two simple roles: that of consumer and entrepreneur. This reinforces the previous narrative made about New Right thinking and begins to position a changing role for the teaching profession and parents within this construct when one applies it to the education system. The traditional role of parent changes in that they must perform a more active role out if they are to maximise their potential gain within this market-led system; the education system has to therefore respond accordingly to this.

Many hoped that, in 1997, the replacement of the Conservative government with that of New Labour would change the direction of this policy. However, despite the promise of New Labour's famous slogan 'Education, education, education' at the start of their first term in office, it has been argued that the hope, optimism and expectancy of this period have now been severely dashed (Docking, 2000). This is mainly because that 'for all the rhetoric, the present government's policies for schools are fundamentally the Conservative's dressed up in New Labours clothes' (Docking, 2000: 32). Indeed, when one studies the education policies of the New Labour government over the period 1997-2005, four key themes emerge: a determination to raise educational standards; a quest to undertake the modernisation of educational systems, structures and practices; a commitment to promoting choice and diversity within education; and a preoccupation with the study of performance as a means to increase effectiveness. Such policies have increased the reliance on a free market in the education system rather than reduced it. This is reinforced by the tone and focus of the 2005 White Paper (DfES, 2005) whose main tenets were outlined in the Introduction to this thesis.

This trend in educational policy is not isolated in nature, however. Carter and O'Neill (1995) have summarised evidence on the state of education policy making in their two volume collection of international perspectives on educational reform. Within this, they identify the 'New Orthodoxy' that redefines, as they see it, the relationship between politics, government and education in Westernised post-industrialised countries (1995: 9). They cite 5 main elements to this new orthodoxy. Firstly, they talk about improving national economics by tightening a connection between schooling, employment, productivity and trade. Next, they discuss enhancing student outcomes in employment related skills and competencies. The third element is attaining more direct control over curriculum and assessment. Fourth is reducing the costs to government of education and finally increasing community input to education by more direct involvement in school decision making and pressure of market choice.

All of the above aspects of development towards a market based education system can be identified in New Labour policies in England. Such policies have produced and developed many tensions and criticisms within the education community as it becomes apparent that New Right ideology is the main doctrine that this government subscribes too. Some of these tensions and criticisms will be explored in the next section.

2.1.3 - A critical analysis of the English education system

The introduction of a market-led ethos into the world of education in England has produced a large scale critical reaction (for example, Ball 1990, Ball 1999, Harber 2005, Harris and Ranson 2005). Most of the critics revolve their arguments around either social themes or professional themes. Some of the issues concerning the social themes are best summarised by the work of Lauder (1997: 388) who asks three pertinent questions. Firstly, will parents have genuinely enhanced choice within a market led system and will this promote greater

informed parental participation in education? Next, will a market-led system create schools with a well-balanced social class mix? Finally, will a market-based system promote an education for democratic citizenship?

At the same time, the professional themes can be viewed as equally valid with Soucek (1994: 46) arguing that the transition towards a market-led, or post-Fordist, schooling system will necessitate organisational restructuring modelled on a corporate managerial approach, a redefinition of teacher professionalism and an articulation of educational outcomes in terms of national priorities.

The social questions have been addressed by Harris and Ranson (2005: 572-573) who argue that:

‘.....while the policies of choice and diversity appear to champion and reinforce equal opportunities, in practice they are simultaneously and actively reducing the scope for forms of collective action most likely to address the structural predicament of class and educational opportunity’.

This point is actually supported by the Government who, in their Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES, 2004) recognise the fact that since coming to office in 1997 ‘we have not yet broken the link between social class and achievement’. Ball (2003) argues that the current government policies only serve to reinforce the inequities of the neo-liberal market place and strengthen traditional hierarchies and boundaries of class, race and gender.

The reason for this criticism is quite simple, It would appear that after 9 years of government policy linked to New Right ideology, a combination of market individualism and control through constant evaluation and comparative assessment has labelled certain schools as ‘under-performing’ and therefore positioned them indefinitely at the lower echelons of the tables. Through this assessment process, educational attainment is linked mostly to academic

achievement. Additionally, schools within certain socio-economic arenas are destined to have their positions reinforced in this league system because of a combination of resource, parental support and children's motivations and aspirations.

As a result of this, parental choice means that individuals can 'vote with their feet' – ie move their children from an underperforming school to one whose performance is more 'acceptable'. The fact is, however, that it is more likely to be parents from middle class families who will do this rather than those of lower economic groups. This point is reinforced by research by Apple (2001: 73) who says that:

'.....more affluent parents have more flexible hours and can visit multiple schools. They have cars – often more than one – and can afford driving their children across town to attend a 'better' school'.

This notion contrast with parents and families in poor and disadvantaged communities who are less likely to be able to 'work the system'. This leaves more children in high poverty areas grouped together in the same school, thus creating the kind of intake mix that severely limits a schools ability to improve its performance (Thrupp, 1999).

Another potential social aspect related to the marketisation of education has been a redefinition of values within children. This is particularly true of the concepts of consumption and production. Ball (1994, p146) claims that 'insofar as students are influenced and affected by their institutional environment then the system of morality 'taught' by schools is increasingly well accommodated to the values complex of the enterprise culture'. Old values of community, cooperation, individual need and equal worth, which Ball claims underlay public systems of comprehensive education, are being replaced with marketplace values that celebrate individualism, competition, performance and differentiation. Thus, there

could be a hidden curriculum in play which produces a mindset within its pupils that does not dovetail precisely with a liberal, egalitarian society.

From the above evidence it would appear that the New Right ideology, when applied to education, is not having the positive effect that the government would have wished for. Is the same true for the professional aspect of education? Unfortunately, the answer here too, it would appear, is 'Yes'. A study over a five year period involving 7,000 pupils, 250 teachers and the observation of 97 lessons in primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions concluded that:

'The national curriculum, in operation, enforced limited courses restricted to the rote-learning of subject-specific knowledge so that pupils may perform well in written tests of memory. It is my contention that this knowledge-based, assessment curriculum demands didactic drill-training to ensure examination success and that such a pedagogy suppresses the development of a critical disposition, so that the school leaver becomes a passive serf , rather than an emancipated citizen or productive worker' (Griffith, 2000: xvii).

Thus, this research would suggest that the very skills and ideologies that individuals need to operate within the market-based system are not being developed whilst at school. If school leavers are not being developed as 'emancipated citizens' or 'productive workers' then how can they be expected to make informed decisions about their children's education in later life? This is ironic when in Schools Achieving Success (DfES, 2001: 5), the government argues that 'the success of our children at school is crucial to the economic health of the country'.

Additionally, the examination success of pupils from differing socio-economic backgrounds differs widely as well. This point was raised by Bell (2003) in a speech to mark the tenth anniversary of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). In this he stated that the gap is such that 32% of children whose

parents have 'routine occupations' are likely to leave school with five good GCSE passes compared with 81% of children from more advantaged homes. This point is reinforced in the Ofsted Annual report (2003) which notes that 'while improvement in schools with the highest levels of social disadvantage has been greater than that of any group of schools', nevertheless 'the gap between the average achievement in the highest performance schools and the lowest continues to widen' (Ofsted, 2003: 79).

This fact is made even more relevant when one relates it to the government's focus on 'performativity'; a notion defined by Broadfoot (2001: 136-137) as 'a rationalistic assumption that it is possible – and indeed, desirable – to measure performance, whether this be of the individual pupil or the institution as a whole'. Broadfoot argues that this notion of 'Performativity' dominates New Labour policies and includes 5 main beliefs (Broadfoot, *ibid*: 137). The first of these is that decisions concerning curriculum (input), pedagogy (process) and assessment (outcomes) should be centralised. Next is that there are standards of 'quality' that can be objectively measured. The third is that it is necessary and desirable to assess institutional quality according to externally defined performance indicators. The fourth belief is that the punitive use of league tables and other publicly shaming devices will help to drive up educational performance and finally is that assessment is a neutral measuring instrument which only requires further technical developments to make it more effective. The research cited previously would suggest that this is not the case for the English education system and that current government policy is not having the positive effect in terms of performance as it would have hoped.

Coupled with the research about individual performance, is a focus on the effect of educational reforms on the management of schools themselves. Here a concept of 'modernisation' has been evident. This is signalled by a significant restructuring of the leadership and governance of education. In the Five Year Strategy for Schools (DfES, 2004) there is a promise of freedom and autonomy

for school leaders, affording them simple accountabilities and streamlined funding arrangements. This is so that 'the people on whom the system depends, those at the front line, must be given the freedom to shape and reshape the offer to meet different and changing needs' (DfES, *ibid*, Secretary of State: 2). This seductive talk, however, may be a covert way of saving money rather than increasing efficiency or effectiveness. The government's focus is very much on using modernisation as a means to remodel the public sector along the lines of 'best' commercial practices. But the net result, at this moment in time, is causing some widespread negative reactions and consequences.

Olssen et al (2004: 185-197) argue that this policy has led to 3 main issues in schools in England. Firstly, is the de-professionalism of schools in England. In this context the writers argue that schools are open to overt control of curriculum and workloads by central government. Thus, teachers' personal involvement in the design and delivery of the learning is eroded. Next, is the rebirth of managerialism. Olssen et al (*ibid*) define this as a 'pre-occupation with quality'. Thus, in schools we see a greater emphasis on the use of objective setting, planning, reviewing, internal monitoring and external reporting. This notion would link to the one of 'Performativity' previously described in this section. Finally, is the development of a culture of mistrust. The writers argue that the ultimate results of the previous two actions are a marked reduction in levels of 'trust' in schools. Teachers no longer feel trusted and this emanates in how they might act within the staff-room and classrooms.

Schick (1996: 25) points out that this is a natural reaction to a neo-liberal policy as this tends to generate the development of complex reporting systems to administer the system, the weakening of collective interest and cooperative activity and the erosion of public service values and their replacement with self-serving values.

Such a view is also supported by the economist, Tim Hazeldine (1998: 216) who says that:

'Monitoring directly diverts resources from productive activities and, more insidiously, it fosters the sort of behaviour that it is supposed to prevent. People who are systematically not trusted will eventually become untrustworthy'.

So it possible to create quite a negative picture of an education system operating within the construct of a market led philosophy. The trends arising from this collection of research will be summarised later but before this, I also want to analyse two other associated areas of research that combine with the previous focus: that of marketing activity within schools and parental choice.

2.1.4 - Marketing the school – reactions and attitudes

So far, many factors that are associated with marketization of education have been discussed but one of the emerging challenges for schools is how to 'market' themselves in this new reality. This process of marketing is only one of the ways schools may respond to the new external pressures being placed on them but its importance has only recently been recognised (Oplatka et al, 2002). There is now a widely held view that head-teachers should incorporate marketing techniques and strategies into their roles in order to effectively cope with the new school environment (Davis and Ellison, 1997).

Marketing in this context is defined as:

'The analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programmes designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with a target market to achieve organisational objectives' (Kotler and Fox, 1995: 6).

Thus, head-teachers would be expected to present a clear, positive and effective image of their school to parents and other key stakeholders to gain their support. In particular, this image needs to be focussed on addressing the needs of such interested parties and presenting a captivating strategy through which these needs can be met. However, what is interesting to note is that studies (mostly conducted in the UK) have revealed that most school head-teachers and their staff have not positioned any coherent marketing ideology or practice within their schools, nor do they have a strategic marketing plan. They simply don't have the skills to do this (Bell, 1999). Nor, as it has been argued, do they have the necessary understanding. In research conducted by Oplatka et al (2002), quite a few contrasting perspectives were identified about the impact of marketing on schools. These included quotes such as:

'...there is no place for marketing in education' (Female, English teacher) (Oplatka et al, ibid: 185).

'...this is a school, not a business company' (Female, Food Technology teacher) (Oplatka et al, ibid: 185).

Contrasting with:

'Marketing is saying this is what we are, this is why it's so great, this is why you need it' (Female, head of Science) (Oplatka et al, ibid: 183).

What Oplatka et al's (2002) research does show is that there is wide variety in how the theme of marketing has been embraced and promoted with schools in the UK. In particular, most respondents seemed to think that marketing was an externally facing function that served to sell the benefits of a school to parents. Most teachers interviewed in the survey did not associate marketing with the internal processes of the school although a few respondents did allude to this fact. In fact one of the respondents was very clear in his view that:

'The existing children are our best ambassadors, because they know how we are, that we are good...' (Male, History teacher) (Oplatka et al, ibid: 182)

However, events such as parents evening, open days, prospectus design and interaction with feeder schools were not seen as part of a wider marketing strategy. This is perceived as a 'natural part of schooling' (Oplatka et al, ibid: 179).

Research concerning marketing within Primary Schools is limited as well. Hardie (1991) cites research conducted by Hughes, Wikeley and Nash who conducted a telephone survey of 100 primary Headteachers in a large LEA. The main results showed that 75% of Heads saw parents as consumers, although many added that they were not in sympathy with this perspective. Only one in five Heads claimed to have introduced a new policy specifically because the parents wanted it. About 25% of the Heads interviewed said that they were actively marketing their school and only one third saw themselves as passively marketing through simply spreading good news about the school by word of mouth. Nearly 50% believed that they did not market the school at all.

What is demonstrated by the above and the Oplatka et al (2002) study is that teachers' overall commitment to marketing is low. This reinforces previous research which has demonstrated that in most schools marketing is the preserve of the headteacher (James and Phillips, 1995), most teachers are not aware of the parents' views and preferences and even ignore these views in practice (Smyth, 1998) and only in schools that have been determined as having 'fully motivated' staff do individuals express high levels of commitment to school marketing (Foskett, 1998).

2.1.5 - The marketing process used by schools

With regard to the importance of marketing for schools in England, Bush (1999: 9) states:

'The shift to self-managing schools, and the concomitant requirement to compete with other institutions for students, means that effective marketing has become much more important for the success and vitality of schools'.

If this is the case, what processes do schools use when engaging with the process of marketing? The first element to understand is the actual market that the relative organisation operates in. This point is explained by Foskett (2002: 243) who sees 'markets and marketing as miasmic concepts, permeated by value-laden perspectives'. The market in which education is now sited has been explained previously within this Literature Review; this section deals purely with the marketing processes employed by schools. However, as Foskett (1996) demonstrated there is a wide range of interpretations of marketing amongst managers in secondary schools and confusion about its relationship to public relations, promotion, advertising and external relations management. This confusion is, to a large degree, caused by a range of marketing orientations that a school may choose on which to base their marketing strategy. Foskett (1999) sees three such orientations with these being product-orientation, sales-orientation and market-orientation. In product-orientated organisations, the marketing focus is on promoting, or raising awareness of, the product or service they are associated with. In sales-oriented organisations, the marketing emphasis is on increasing direct sales of the product. About this, Foskett (1999:35) says the following:

'Such a sales oriented culture is often the marketing stereotype.....The first response of an educational institution moving from the market-protected positions of monopoly power (e.g. impermeable school catchments or LEA

allocation of particular courses to particular FE courses), or of great excess demand over supply (e.g. applications to higher education in the 1970s) is to seek to sell what it already offers very vigorously’.

A market-oriented organisation, however, is one in which the customer is central to the operation with an emphasis on providing goods or services that the customer actually wants or desires. Hardie (1991) argues that it is this orientation that has been prevalent in schools for years, albeit not formally recognised or embraced. He says:

‘Several decades ago school public relations were defined as a ‘cooperative development and maintenance of efficient two way channels of information between the school, its personnel and the community’ (Hardie, 1991: 17).

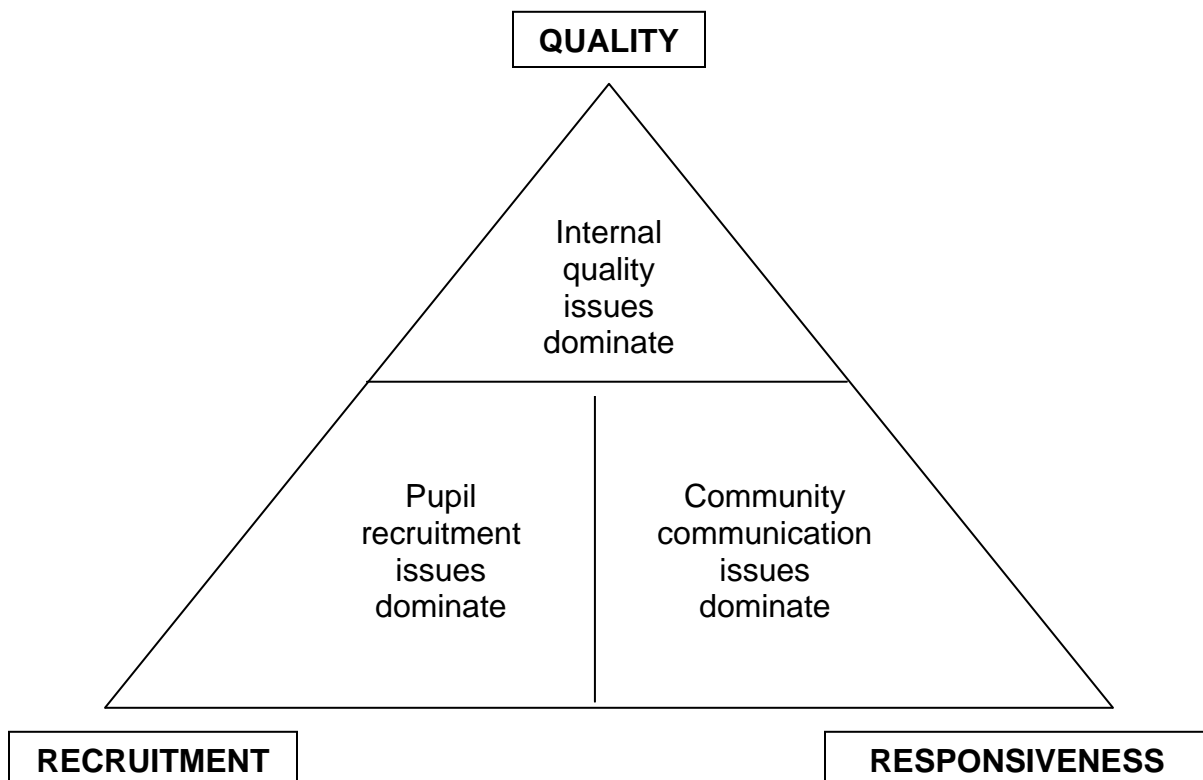
However, as Foskett (1999) argues there is a difference between managing external relations and effective marketing. He defines external relations management as ‘those aspects of an organisation’s activities that in any way cause it to relate to an audience beyond its own boundaries’ (Foskett, 1999: 37). To this end, putting up a sign saying parents must not proceed beyond a certain point is managing external relations, but is probably not very effective marketing.

Marketing in education has also not been needed for a variety of historic reasons. These are identified by Cowell (1984) who presents five key reasons why service industries, such as education, have not traditionally taken a strong marketing perspective. The first of these is that service products are inherently intangible which makes their promotion difficult as the consequence of the service is often long-term in impact. Next, services in the professional sector may see marketing as unethical as it could compromise the relationship between them and their ‘client’. Thirdly, some areas had such a demand for their services that promotion or marketing was deemed unnecessary. Next, most educational institutions have had a monopoly in terms of course programmes or catchment

area and so, again, have not needed to market themselves. Finally, there has been little professional guidance or training on this subject for managers in this sector. The change to a market-based education system has caused Headteachers and educationalists to revisit these issues but the situation is still complicated in England and Wales in that schools are:

‘.....expected to compete for pupils, but are highly constrained by the imposition of a centrally imposed curriculum, a rigid inspection system and the promotion of tightly defined performance indicators which limit the opportunities for schools to differentiate themselves’ (Foskett, 2002: 244).

To assist schools to define their relative marketing process, Foskett (2002) has created a model for schools which he terms the marketing triad. This is reflected in model 2.1 below:



Model 2.1 – The Marketing Triad (Foskett, 2002:246)

With regard to this model, Foskett (ibid) argues that many schools and colleges do not have pupil recruitment as the only aim when it comes to marketing. This is particularly true where catchment areas are fixed or when the school is oversubscribed. Within these circumstances, more effort will be directed to the management of the quality of educational provision and/or the relationship with key stakeholders and the community. In the case of brand development in schools it is my belief that there has to be a sense of balance between all three of these elements. The brand has to reflect the needs of the relevant community and be delivered in a high quality manner to ultimately attract more people to it.

The Foskett model also points to the fact that marketing is not just about an externally facing dynamic. It has to involve both external and internal processes. This point is emphasised by Foskett (1999: 37) when he says:

‘A perception that marketing is simply about choosing the message the institution wants to convey and then communicating that by public relations and promotional activity ignores the importance of underpinning the image with effective quality assurance’.

These twin processes are known as ‘external marketing’ and ‘internal marketing’. According to Foskett (2002), internal marketing includes such dynamics as quality assurance, relationship marketing and cultural change processes. This perspective also links to research carried out by Foskett (1998) to review marketing practices carried out by Primary Schools in England. In this he indicates:

‘A strong commitment to educational values drives them, together with the establishment of strong relationships with the community. The role of word-of-mouth is so important that a ‘selling’ orientation is of little assistance, so many primary schools have, by default, and without reference to the ‘canons’ of marketing, adopted a strategy that is ‘relationship marketing’ (Foskett, 1998: 54).

This concept of relationship marketing was first presented by Grootenboer (1997) in relation to work carried out by many small businesses to compete in the modern economic climate. In this, 'success is based on the development of a relationship which goes far beyond the sale of the service or product' (Foskett, 2002: 247). In the opinion of Foskett (ibid: 247) this form of marketing is by far the best strategy for many schools and colleges to adopt as they already employ many of its facets at an unconscious level.

The research conducted here links to a process associated with an internal marketing strategy. The establishment of an effective vision and then cascaded into an internal brand identity acts as one of the main thrusts of internal marketing and, in my opinion, is of primary importance before any thought of external marketing can take place. This point of view is supported by Wheeler (2006).

However, as has already been discussed, even though there is a considerable amount of literature pertaining to marketing in schools, a high percentage schools aren't actively promoting themselves through a well-considered marketing strategy. In this case, how are parents making their choice about which school to send their children to? This question is especially pertinent when legislation demands that certain standards have to be achieved and the quality of delivery reinforced by such mechanism as Ofsted. In this context, marketing the school would seemingly be about positioning its 'meaning in society' (Cova, 1993: 14). But is this the case? What are the processes used by parents to reach their decision? These questions will be reviewed in the next section.

2.1.6 - Parental choice

As previously described, one of the key tenets of a market led education system is the notion of parental choice. The rationale behind this, in neo-liberal terms is

that such involvement will present three advantages to parents. These points are succinctly argued by Jeynes (2000: 224). First, he says it will promote the notion of liberty in that parents will be free to choose the school of their choice for their children. Next, he argues that it also allow them control with parents will be able to influence the type of school and curriculum that their child is exposed to. Finally, he states it will lead to educational quality with parents able to choose the best schools for their children.

One of the reasons cited why school choice attracts so much attention is because of the accompanying promise that school choice will increase school quality. What is interesting, however, is that studies on private versus public schools all show that the private ones out-perform the public ones on a number of levels when measured by tests scores and the satisfaction of parents and children (Lee and Bryk, 1993). The reasons given for this better performance include stricter discipline, an emphasis on traditional values, more demanding academic standards and student selectivity used by private schools (eg the Common Entrance Exam) (Lee and Bryk, *ibid*). What is interesting is there is little, if any, evidence to support the fact that choice is the main reason why private schools perform so well. So, if choice is not the key ingredient in the development of private schools, how can it be used as the panacea for public ones? This point is reflected upon by Roseberg (1989: 9) who says:

‘.....if choice is used as a cheap substitute for this more fundamental pursuit, then the prospects of turning around our public schools system and dramatically improving the education of our children will be more remote than ever’.

What is clear though, is where school choice is exercised at all it tends to be by more affluent, middle class parents rather than those from lower socio-economic status (Gerwitz et al, 1995). The reasons cited by parents for choosing schools also varies according to social status. Research carried by out by Bernal (2005) demonstrates that reasons given for choosing certain schools varies markedly

across 4 different micro-markets. The reasons cited by the families in each school is summarised in the table below.

Type of school	Reasons cited for choosing that school
Private schools (upper and middle class families)	Elitism. Discipline and order. Participation controlled by an authority.
State schools (upper and lower middle class families)	Favourable social environment. Prestigious school. Parents experience and expectations. Proximity. Facilities offered.
State schools (working class).	Diverse student population. Flexible discipline- greater tolerance. Non-religious ideology. Parents experience and expectations. Proximity. Facilities offered.
State schools (economically distressed populations).	Proximity

Table 2:1 - Reasons offered by parents for choosing schools (adapted from Bernal, ibid)

This research also demonstrates the amount of time parents spend selecting schools. Bernal divided the parents into three groups: non-electors, moderate electors and demanding electors. His findings suggest that 50% of parents do not choose their school and take their children to the nearest one. They are non-electors. About 1/3 of parents dedicate some effort into choosing a school, searching for quality rather than proximity. They are moderate electors. The remainder believe that choice of school is essential and they invest time and effort into this process. They are demanding electors. Thus, the micro markets themselves are not conditioned by geographical spaces but by socio-cultural spaces. Although the research focus is on secondary schools, I believe the lessons can still be applied to primary schools as well. What is relevant is the fact that this research clearly demonstrates that, in the majority of cases, parental

choice is not being exercised to the extent that government policy demands. For the majority of the population, the local school will be the one their children attend, whatever its performance levels.

2.1.7 - Summary of Section 1

What I have tried to do in this first section is present some of the arguments associated with the development of a market-led education system as well as a historical summary. One thing which is eminently clear is the fact that some schools' notion of what marketing is and whose role it is to do this is confused at best. This does not place them in an advantageous position when it comes to surviving in a market led system.

If this is the case, what should such schools do? How can you tie up all of these loose threads and offer an educational provision that links all of the government initiatives and, at the same time, raises standards and operates in line with the demands of a market system? Current research does not necessarily offer this answer as it tends to be based on empirical data rather than practical guidelines.

The main thrust of my research is to therefore utilise a combination of experience and theory from industry and apply it to a school to see if the issues outlined above can be addressed. The main focus of this is to develop a 'brand identity' within a school but before this process is developed, it is necessary to understand exactly what is meant by the term 'brand'. Such a definition will be provided in Section 2 of this Literature Review.

2.2 Section 2 – A definition of brand

If one reviews how the term 'brand' has been defined during the past 50 years one can see it has been completely re-defined. In today's parlance, its use has now an almost total commercial orientation. However, there is still a hint of its

common origin. Almost irrespective of how the term is used, in its passive form it still means the object by which 'an impression is formed' and in its active form the 'process of forming this impression' (Blackett, 2003: 13).

When reviewing the notion of brand the majority of material available is derived from the business world, not the purely academic one. Therefore, I have had to draw upon such works as are available to present a thematic overview of the concept of brand and link this to the focus of my research design. I have also had to rely on my personal knowledge about brands and branding to present a coherent overview of this subject. As a starting point, however, it would seem prudent to discuss the historical development of the concept of brand and position a modern definition of this subject.

2.2.1 - A short history of brands

The word brand comes from the Norse 'brandr' meaning to burn and from these origins it made its way into Anglo-Saxon dialect. It was through burning that early man stamped his ownership onto his livestock and, with the development of trade, buyers would use these brands as a way of differentiating between the livestock of different owners. A farmer with a particularly strain of cattle would find his 'brand' would be cherished whereas one with a lesser quality herd would be less sought after. Thus, the association between brand as a mark of quality was established at a very early stage in our history.

This use of 'brand' as a means of identification was continued in early manufactured goods as well with potters placing their mark on the pots they had made. This is especially true of pots made in the Mediterranean region by the ancient civilisations of Rome and Greece. Here, potters would leave their mark as a symbol (ie a fish or cross) and by this, their work could be clearly identified. At this stage, symbols rather than names became the earliest visual form of brands. Such a process continued throughout the Middle Ages in Europe and

was used by many of the noble families and Royalty as a way of distinguishing their mark. The fleur-de-lys in France and the Hapsburg eagle are two good examples of this.

As industry increased in the 17th and 18th Centuries the use of brands became even more common place. They were used as indicators of quality and were developed into hallmarks for use on gold and silver items. Thus, the link between brands and quality was reinforced to give the consumer absolute confidence in the product.

Finally, with the industrial revolution came mass marketing of products and, with it, the use of trade marks. During this period, many of the household names we know today were established. Trade names such as Coca-Cola, Sunlight soap, Shredded Wheat cereal and American Express travellers' cheques all emerged during this period. The introduction of trade marks meant that companies could protect their brand names through law as well as use them as a lever for marketing.

However, it is since the end of WWII that brands have really exploded in their commercial importance. The advent of improved communications and transport has meant that brands have been seen to 'symbolise the convergence of the world's economies on the demand-led rather than command-led model' (Blackett, *ibid*: 15). But to many, a brand is still just a symbol or trade mark. In commercial terms it has developed to mean much more than that. It is, in essence, the encapsulation of the whole operating style of an organisation and it is this notion of brand that is of particular importance when translated into the world of education.

2.2.2 - The notion of brand – a C21st view

As mentioned in the introduction to this research, I think one of the best definitions of a brand is the one created by Gardner and Levy (2003: 27) who say that it is 'a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes. It tells the consumer many things, not only by the way it sounds but, more important, via the body of associations it has built up and acquired as a public object over a period of time'. This definition has been further refined as 'a product is something that is made in a factory; a brand is something that is brought by a consumer' (Miller and Muir, 2004: 4). Thus, a brand has two defining attributes. Firstly, a brand is the result of behaviour. Brands are judged by their actions and not just their advertising – for a consumer, a single bad experience will unravel the most carefully spun brand. Everything, therefore, an organisation does has the potential to either reinforce or destroy a brand. The culture of the organisation needs to be aligned to the brand to produce the most powerful experience for its stakeholders. Secondly, a brand exists only in people's minds. It is the people within organisations who bring brands to life – not products. Brands are found not in organisational policies or strategy documents, but in the minds of consumers and producers alike. The brand is a 'public object' – the strongest brands are those which have developed a strong sense of ownership (Miller and Muir, *ibid*: 5).

These points are reinforced by David Aaker (2002: 3) who says there are 5 main reasons for developing and reinforcing brands from an organisational perspective. He lists them as, firstly, a brand enhances the value of a product or service beyond its functional purpose. Next, a brand is a link between the various stakeholders of an organisation providing a badge of continuity and trust. Thirdly, a brand is linked directly to behaviour – everything an organisation says or does affects the brand. The fourth advantage is that a brand is not a 'real' thing – it is the sum collection of feelings and perceptions in the mind of its constituent

stakeholders. Finally, he says a brand will provide an organisation with purpose and direction - producing a source of motivation and engagement for all involved.

Therefore, most writers about brand agree that, when used correctly, a brand becomes a central lever that enhances both the internal and external appeal of organisations that, in turn, creates a better standard of product or service delivery. However, that is not to say that the concept of brand is without its critics. One of the most notable is Naomi Klein who, in her book 'No Logo' (2000) denounces the power of global brands and their impact on the global economy. But, the essence of her argument is centred on those brands who have exploited their commercial power at the expense of their employees. As an example, she cites the use of sweat shop labour in China by Nike. I agree that such a strategy is indefensible by any organisation but this goes against the main theoretical thrust of brand image. Where brand image is aligned to a central vision with clearly articulated values, a distinctly positive condition is obtained. A case study of this in action is the story of Virgin Atlantic airways and this demonstrates the concept of brand in action at an organisational level.

2.2.3 - Virgin Atlantic Airways

Richard Branson and a few friends founded Virgin Records in 1970 as a small mail-order retail company in the UK. A comparatively small retail store was then opened on Oxford Street, London a year later. The name Virgin was chosen because of the lack of business experience the group had. Within 13 years, the company grew to be the largest chain of record shops and independent record label in the UK with artists including Mike Oldfield, Boy George, the Sex Pistols and the Rolling Stones as its principal acts.

This retail arm expanded even further to include Virgin 'megastores' such as the one in Times Square, New York. In 1984, the Virgin Group expanded into the airline industry and, despite efforts by BA to crush it (Branson, 1999) the

organisation has prospered. By 1997, it had exceeded £5 billion in annual sales, had served 30 million passengers and had established itself as the second largest airline on most of its routes and markets. Even though the organisation is only about as big as Alaskan Airlines, it enjoys a huge consumer awareness and reputation as a large international carrier. For example, a 1994 survey showed that over 90% of all British Consumers had heard of Virgin Atlantic (Aaker, 2000: 34).

To achieve this, Virgin Atlantic has exhibited the positive use of brand as a strategic tool. Their organisational strategy is based on four core values and their whole operating process is centred upon these. All of these are interlinked directly with the Virgin Atlantic brand. The values are, firstly, a focus on 'service quality'. Virgin Atlantic has received multiple awards for its service quality including being voted the best transatlantic carrier for the seventh consecutive year in 1997 and the best in business class for the 9th year. The next value is 'innovation'. The Virgin philosophy on innovation is simple: be first with everything. To do this, the company invests 3% of revenues into research and development – more than double the spend of its American counterparts (Aaker, 2000: 35). This enables it to introduce concepts such as integral video screens, in-flight-massages and sleeper seats way ahead of its competitors. The third value is 'fun'. Virgin's airport lounges include putting greens, masseurs, jacuzzis and beauty therapists. The goal is to create memorable, fun, entertaining experiences. The final Virgin Atlantic value is 'value for money'. The Virgin Atlantic Upper Class service is priced at the same rate as other airlines Business Class. Similarly, mid-class Virgin tickets gives you a Business Class experience and economy tickets are available at a discount. Thus, the Virgin experience is within the reach of most air travellers.

These principles are not just the preserve of the marketers or sales team though. They are the core principles that underpin every business transaction and behaviour at all levels within the organisation as well. Thus, there is clear

alignment between the organisations espoused values and operating principles which means that the value of the brand is reinforced every time a consumer interacts with it. This is one of the contributing reasons why Virgin Atlantic was ranked as one of the Best Companies to Work for in the UK in 2006 (Sunday Times, 2006).

2.2.4 - Developing a concept of brand

There are two aligned approaches to 'brand building' within the commercial world and these are through a focus on 'brand equity' (a commercial route) and through the development of 'brand values' (a behavioural route). Most available literature tends to concentrate on the commercial route as this provides the greatest immediate return on investment for organisations; the behavioural route tends to happen as an afterthought even though this has the greatest impact on brand development in the long-term (Davidson, 2005).

Also, there are many barriers to building brands. Aaker (2000: 26-35) reviews these barriers and has presented a case for eight main factors that inhibit brand development. The first of these, in the commercial world, is a pressure to compete only on price. This means that, despite all a brand's espoused values and attributes, financial pressures may reduce the time, effort and focus on the development of the brand itself. Many organisations do this through the reduction of overheads and this can easily be translated into the education sector. Head-teachers may well have the inclination to build a great brand within their school but do they have the resources? If time, finance, and manpower are limited then the scope to develop any sense of brand will be limited too.

The second barrier is the proliferation of competitors. If a market is swamped by competitors who offer an equivalent service or product, it is more difficult for a brand to raise its head as a market leader. In this case, Aaker suggests that the only thing a brand can do is to decide what truly makes itself different and lever

this difference to maximum advantage. Again, this has direct application to schools who all, at face value, offer the same service. What does make each of them different and present a real, valid alternative to its potential customers?

The third of the barriers is the fragmentation of the market place and media. This is defined as the ever increasing change in both social structures and media availability. People are more mobile today in their lifestyles and attitudes and have an abundant array of information at their disposal. How do brands compete with this? How do they communicate their message and through what media? For schools, who must they communicate with, in what style and using what process? Do they need a website, SMS messaging service, an entry onto MySpace or standard newsletter and school magazine offer?

The next five barriers all relate to internal pressures within organisations. These are the complexity of relationships, changing strategies, a bias against innovation, pressure to invest elsewhere and short term pressures. All of these pressures apply to schools in that they are essentially a combination of human factors. As an example, there may be a prevalent atmosphere within the school that rebels against innovation as it could be seen as managerialism or a new fad that will pass quickly enough if it is ignored. Also, short term pressures are obvious in any school one visits. The constant leap from lesson to lesson, term to term and the consistent introduction of new government policy, focus or intervention means that school staffs are constantly trying to integrate change and development on a daily basis. How do they balance the short term pressure of this with the long term requirements of developing a concept of brand in the school?

However, there are examples, from the commercial world of how organisations face up to these pressures and still achieve success. Davidson (2005: 24) cites the case study of Harley Davidson motorcycles as a demonstration of an effective approach to brand building in action. He states that, in the 1960s, Harley

Davidson owned the motorcycle market in the USA for machines over 650 cc. But by the 1980s , their market share had plummeted from over 70% to 15.2%. This was coupled with the fact that, in the 1970s, workforce had to be severed by over 40% because of cash flow problems. Quality, morale and performance were at an all time low.

In 1987, a new Chief Executive Officer, Rich Teerlink, was appointed. He instigated a change process which was focussed on aligning all key stakeholders of the organisation to the brand. This was done by, firstly introducing a new vision to the organisation in 1989 which was simply:

'To be a leader in continuous improvement in mutually beneficial relationships with all our stakeholders'.

Next, five core values were agreed by all employees in 1989 as the behavioural framework for this vision. These values were: tell the truth; be fair; keep your promises; respect the individual; and encourage intellectual curiosity.

Five strategic issues were also spotlighted to aid improvement and these were quality, participation, productivity, flexibility and cash flow. It was recognised that the organisation had to succeed on all these issues to reach its vision. After this, all organisational practices and policies were aligned and amended to link to these principles. All levels of employee were expected to model and promote these behaviours in practice and the whole organisation became committed to making it happen. Ten years after their implementation, the company's market share has moved back up to 49.5% and the organisation is viewed as one of the most widely recognised brands in the world (Davidson, *ibid*: 27).

The case study above suggests that there are four practical elements to consider if the development of the brand is to be successful. The process must be inclusive in approach, must be longitudinal in nature (ie spread over a long period

of time), produce a consistency of approach within the employees of the organisation and maintain the employees' total engagement within the process. It also encapsulates a current view of how to build an effective brand from a behavioural perspective. Work by Aaker (2002) breaks this process of brand-building down into eight key elements and these will be discussed in turn.

Firstly, brand building is not just advertising. Many organisations see the creation and development of a brand as the preserve of purely the marketing department. However, for a brand to be truly effective, the qualities of the brand need to be promoted and reinforced at every opportunity. In a school, this means that having a glossy brochure for the school is pointless if the promises contained within it are not reinforced in every classroom by every member of staff.

Next, brand building involves innovation. To create a really strong brand, innovation and change are paramount. To be different means to behave differently and so traditional rules, boundaries and regulations sometimes have to be dismissed. In schools, an environment of 'we've always done it this way' will not assist effective brand building and the ability to think differently and creatively will be essential for a school brand's success.

Third, excellence in execution creates huge payoffs. This links to the principle of 'action speaks louder than words'. Here, if a promise is made by a brand, it has to be delivered on. A focus on excellence in every practical scenario is crucial for a brand's success. A brand will only be as strong as its weakest link.

Fourth, products are the key to a brand. A brand must have something to give whether it be a service or product. This offer must be easy to understand (ie we know what we are going to get from this provider) and must be delivered as promised.

Fifth, the brand is more than its products. Although this seems contradictory to point number 4, it is designed to complement it. Having a product is one thing; the delivery of it is something else. Teaching can be provided in a boring, static style but it is still teaching. For the teaching to be more vibrant, the behaviours and style associated with its delivery need to be addressed. Thus behaviours are every bit important as the actual product or service.

Next, the brand identity needs to be known. Everyone involved with the brand needs to understand and promote it at every stage. A brand should be easy to understand and communicated in both action and deed. Orange, the mobile communications organisation, summarise this quite succinctly when they say to its employees that 'You have to be Orange on the inside before you can be Orange on the outside'.

The seventh element, Aaker (ibid) says is that the team should run the brand. A brand is not the preserve of one person. A brand needs to operate at a team level in that every member of the organisation needs to operate in a way that is representative of the brand's espoused values and attributes. To make a brand 'live', everyone has to be involved and engaged with the process.

Finally, he says the brand should connect with customers on an emotional level. Strong brands do not rely just on product; they develop an emotional connection with their customers. Such customers feel proud to own or engage with the brand. Their experience is reinforced every time they make contact with the brand.

These eight elements all contribute to the development of a brand but do not provide a clear process of how to make this happen. This is because all organisations are different and so the application of these principles will also vary.

This work also links to suggested model presented by Alina Wheeler (2006) who presents a model of how to establish a brand identity. She says:

‘Regardless of the size of company or the nature of the business, certain ideals characterize the best brand identities. These ideals hold true whether the brand identity engagement is launching an entrepreneurial venture, creating a new product or service, repositioning a brand, working on a merger, or creating a retail presence. In every case, these ideals are essential to a responsible creative process’ (Wheeler, ibid: 16).

These ‘brand ideals’ are summarised in 2.2 table overleaf. These principles can be applied to brand building whether one is taking a behavioural or product focus. They also link to a notion of ‘New Marketing’ as defined by John Grant (2000). He says:

‘Old Marketing was external, while New Marketing deals with ideas – brands – that are change agents both outside and inside the business. For this to be true, then there is another kind of authenticity to which marketers need to embrace. As Shakespeare wrote ‘To your own self be true’. New Marketing must be true to the vision and values of the company’ (Grant, ibid: 169).

So, a view of effective brand development links the vision of the organisation directly to the brand itself. A vision gives the focus to the brand. It also means that the creation of a model for the development of a brand within primary schools will be advantageous to headteachers, so they can link their vision to a simple and effective process that will create a strong brand identity for their school.

Brymer (2003) presents a model of brand evaluation that includes three principle qualities and five distinctive traits that positions a brand as high-performing or, in simple terms, great. The principle qualities he proposes are that, firstly it must be a compelling idea. Behind every brand is a compelling idea which customers’

attention and loyalty by filling an unmet or unsatisfied need. Next, he suggests that it must have a resolute core purpose and supporting values. People need to know what the brand stands for and how it intends to operate. This generates what is known as a 'Customer Value Proposition' (Vishwanath and Mark, 1997), a reaction to the product at both a functional and an emotional level. For example, the Customer Value Proposition for a product such as Audi cars is around sporty and prestige vehicles coupled with quality and reliable service. Finally, Brymer (ibid) says that each brand must have a central organisational principle. This means that all of the processes, systems and structure associated with the brand are in line with its core purpose and values.

Brand ideals	Definition
Vision	A compelling vision by an effective, articulate and passionate leader is the foundation for the best brands
Meaning	The best brands stand for something – a big idea, a strategic position or a defined set of values
Authenticity	Authenticity is not possible without an organisation having clarity about its market, positioning, value proposition and competitive difference
Differentiation	Brands always compete with each other within their business category and, at some level, compete with all brands that want our attention, focus and loyalty.
Sustainability	Sustainability is the ability to have longevity in a environment in constant flux and characterized by future permutations that no-one can predict.
Coherence	Whenever a customer experiences a brand it must feel familiar and have the desired effect.
Flexibility	An effective brand identity positions a company for change and growth in the future. It supports an evolving strategy
Commitment	Organisations need to ensure all people engaged with the brand have complete motivation and dedication in order for it to succeed
Value	Measurable results need to be created that promote and sustain the brand

Table 2:2 - The brand ideals (Wheeler, ibid: 17-35)

2.2.5 - What makes a brand great?

These qualities begin to provide some assessment criteria for the success of the brand. In addition, according to Brymer (ibid) one would also need to consider the five specific traits as well. The first of these is the brands consistency in delivering their promise. However a brand determines its Customer value Proposition, it must deliver on that promise. There can be no misalignment between customer expectation and reality.

Next, the brand must supply superior products and services. A great brand doesn't just have a service level which is average. They aspire to excellence in everything they do. Third the brand must display distinctive positioning. Even in a crowded market place, great brands have something distinctive about them which separates them from the pack. To do this well, brands must truly understand their market, customers and internal skills.

Fourth, there must be the alignment of internal and external commitment to the brand. Truly great brands generate a sense of passion and connection to it from both employees and customers alike. A good example of this is Harley Davidson where customers have the brand logo tattooed on themselves! Finally, the brand must have an ability to stay relevant. Great brands move with the times and re-invent themselves to meet the needs of their customers. For example, Nokia started as a paper mill in Finland in the C19th and is now the largest manufacturer of mobile phones in the world!

From a behavioural perspective, therefore, the performance of a brand can be measured. This means that a combination of suggested development process and measurement tools could enable the principles of 'branding' to be applied to almost any situation. But, according to my research thus far, this has never been done in the world of English primary education.

2.2.6 - Brands and education

Research carried out that relates the marketing strategies carried out within education to the concept of brand is limited at best. Foskett (2002: 250) writes:

'The importance of branding, image and perception in engaging with the external environment is emphasised by the view that purchasing any good or service, including education, is in fact 'symbolic consumption', or the purchasing of social values and status that go with that service or product'.

Farrell (2001: 173) suggests that 'the marketer has to exploit aspects of the educational institution which have a symbolic significance for the potential clients' and this is the principal function of brand and image. Traditionally, however, such image has been created by publications, symbols, signs and activities. Indeed, research carried out by Foskett (1992) focuses on the establishment and reinforcement of institutional identity. Within this construct he suggests that there are four key elements and these are the educational service provided, the school environment, the provision of information and behaviour and relationships. I would agree that these are all vital components in the establishment of a brand for a school but, unfortunately, the three case studies Foskett (ibid) then cites all focus on purely the creation and establishment of visual identities within the schools e.g the school crest and logo at Crestwood School, the signage and physical environment at Chandlers Ford School, and the logo used at Merdon Junior School. However, as has previously been discussed, the concept of brand is more than just a logo – it is an all inclusive sense of identity. This point is reinforced by Olins (1989:7) when he says:

'In order to be effective every organisation needs a clear sense of purpose that people within it understand. They also need a strong sense of belonging. Purpose and belonging are the two facets of identity. Every organisation is unique and its identity must spring from the organisation's own roots, its

personality, its strengths and weaknesses.....The identity of the organisation must be so clear that it becomes the yardstick against which its products, behaviour and actions are measured. This means that the identity cannot simply be a slogan, a collection of phrases; it must be visible, tangible and all-embracing’.

This sense of identity is reviewed by Murgatroyd and Morgan (1992) when they relate the vision of a school to identity. They say:

‘The vision statement should become the basic challenge for all within the school – the force that shapes and energizes all its members. The school mottoes that were so much in vogue earlier this century – combined with the school badge – might be seen as an early form of vision statement.....What is needed now are new school mottoes i.e. vision statements that embody the contemporary philosophy and tangible vision to which a school is working’ (Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1992: 81).

They go on to say that such a vision should, if written in a simple and coherent way, present three benefits to the school. It will firstly provide a source of inspiration for the school in that it will be the basis for encouraging, enabling and empowering school staff. The second benefit will be as a decision making focus for school plans and strategies. Finally, it will act as a form of team alignment in that it will provide a central focus for the behaviours and actions of school staff. Their work, however, does not include pupils and other stakeholders into the concept and this would need to be addressed when linking their work to the overall development of a brand within a school.

Even allowing for the research cited above, at the time of writing, there are no discernable pieces of research that track the development of the concept of brand within a UK school. What research there is seems to focus on Higher Education but even here the link to brand in its purest sense is tenuous. For

example, Hayes and Wynyard (2002) explore the 'McDonaldization of Higher Education' but this concentrates on the process of Higher Education becoming 'commodified' rather than a true exploration of the impact of brand as a method of organisational improvement. Therefore, I can only conclude that there is no current test case of branding in the fullest sense of the term within schools in the England.

2.2.7 - Summary of Section 2

In this section, I have endeavoured to give a brief overview of the latest commercial view on brand and brand development. What is clear from this is that, although there are many principles that could apply to schools in a market based system, there is little direct application by way of guidance and process.

Certain key themes do emerge from this literature though. The first is the importance of vision in defining a brand. An effective vision provides the direction for the brand to follow. However, such a vision needs to be supported by a sense of purpose: what are we here to do and why? It must also be supported by some form of values. How are we going to make the vision work in reality?

There are little, however, practical ideas by which to make this vision become a reality. One of the best examples is the Harley Davidson case study which demonstrates some key components that may assist in making this development work. These characteristics are that the process must be longitudinal in nature (ie spread over a long period of time and revisited constantly). It must be inclusive in approach in that it involves all of the key stakeholders in the process. It must allow for a consistent approach to be developed by all those involved and it must allow for the total engagement of those people as well.

Therefore, for a concept of brand to succeed within a school a process must be created and developed that links to these ideals. The research methodology

proposed of using an Action Research stance will allow me to do this. It also allows me to further define my research aim which was 'To review how a school's vision creates its own brand identity'. I have already presented my core objectives but I can now further refine these into core questions on which my research will be based. These questions are:

Objective 1 – To identify and explain the link between a school's vision and its operating ethos.

- How was the previous vision viewed by staff members?
- How did the previous vision of the school link to the then ethos of the school?
- What was the staff's reaction to the revised vision?
- How did the revised vision affect the ethos of the school?

Objective 2 – To identify and explain a framework that makes a vision effective from a behavioural perspective.

- What was the reaction of the staff to an inclusive approach?
- What was effect of using an inclusive approach with the staff?
- How were people engaged in the process?
- What was the effect of a longitudinal approach?

Objective 3 – To identify and explain the effects of the process in terms of behavioural response.

- How important was the vision to staff members?
- How much focus did the staff give to the daily application of the vision?
- How was the vision lived in reality?

Objective 4 – To identify and explain the impact of the vision on the school.

- What was the impact of the vision on the School Management Team?
- What was the impact of the vision on the teachers?
- What was the impact of the vision on the teaching assistants?

Thus, these questions link to the core objectives of the study to allow me to understand the relationship between a school's vision and its brand. By developing a school's brand in line with its vision I will be able to evaluate much of the theory discussed in this section.

2.3 Conclusion

I started this literature review by positioning the development of a market based education system in the UK and discussing the potential problems identified with this. I have next reviewed what is meant by the concept of brand and how one might develop and evaluate a brand. Given that brands are being used by nearly every organisation in the global economy as a way of surviving in the free-market (Keller, 2000), could these principles be used in schools? Would a focus on brand allow the problems identified within the first section of this literature review to be addressed? Thus, my research will introduce some of the core aspects of brand development into a Primary School environment. In particular, this process will focus on the how the production of an effective vision will drive and determine this brand image and the research will focus on the subsequent effects of this.

3 – THE RESEARCH DESIGN

As presented in the introduction, the aim of this research enquiry is 'To review how a school's vision creates its brand identity'. To do this, a process of Action Research was used with a focus on four key objectives:

- To identify and explain the link between a school's vision and its operating ethos.
- To identify and explain a framework that makes a vision effective from a behavioural perspective.
- To identify and explain the effects of the process in terms of behavioural response.
- To identify and explain the impact of the vision on the school.

To enable these objectives to be achieved, a defined process of research needed to be established. This chapter reviews the process used for this study and presents a discussion in relation to it. To do this, I have divided this chapter into 3 main sections. Firstly, I will discuss in more detail the philosophical stance I took when designing this research and provide more information about Action Research and how it links to this study. Next, I will discuss the process and methods used in gathering data within this study and, finally, I will discuss the generic design issues relative to this piece of work.

3.1 - The principles of Action Research

One of the most important differences between Action Research and more traditional research methodologies is that in traditional research, the researcher attempted not to influence the situation being studied; in Action Research the researcher intentionally sets out to change the situation being studied. This point is emphasised by Sarantakos (ibid: 113) who says that:

'The elements that characterise Action Research are the personal involvement of the researcher, the emancipatory nature of the research, the active involvement of the researched and its opposition to certain established policies and practices'.

This is particularly true of the research I proposed in that I have a personal opposition to the apparent lack of awareness schools have in operating in the modern 'market-based' education system (as discussed in the Literature Review). As an Action Researcher, I therefore wanted to help schools understand this dynamic better and create a model for their active development. This stance reflects another point made by Sarantakos (ibid: 113) who goes on to say that in Action Research:

'.....the researcher here takes the side of the respondents, helps them to understand their real situation, explains to them the reasons for this and shows them ways of change and liberation. The researcher together with the respondents works towards change'.

The other aspect worthy of note is the relationship between Action Research and an 'emancipatory' philosophical stance. This point is discussed by Zuber-Skerritt (1996a: 3) when she says that:

'Emancipatory Action Research....is collaborative, critical and self-critical inquiry by practitioners...into a major problem or issue or concern in their own practice. They own the problem and feel responsible and accountable for solving it through teamwork and through a cyclical process of:

- 1. Strategic planning.*
- 2. Action, i.e. implementation of the plan.*
- 3. Observation, evaluation and self-evaluation.*
- 4. Critical and self-critical reflection on the results of points 1-3 and making decisions for the next cycle of action'.*

She goes on to argue that Action Research has to be emancipatory in nature because of the lack of hierarchy in the process and the notion of 'symmetrical communication' that is apparent throughout. Thus, there is potential equality throughout the process with the researcher having an equal role in the process to the participants or respondents. In simple terms, Action Research turns those formerly seen as subjects into 'co-researchers' (Dewar and Sharp, 2006: 221). This process therefore creates communities of inquiry that have a mutual engagement in the process of questioning, reflection and action. It is a process that adds to the continuous learning of the participants and works in partnership with them.

The work of Winter (1996: 13-14) provides six key principles of Action Research that have been adapted to be included in table 3.1 below:

PRINCIPLE	DETAILS
Reflexive Critique	In Action Learning, the researcher needs to be aware of personal biases
Dialectical critique	A way of understanding the relationships between elements that make up various phenomena in the context studied
Collaboration	Everyone's view is taken into consideration as a part of the study
Risking Disturbance	Understanding our own personal processes and willingness to submit them to critique
Creating Plural Structures	The development of various accounts and critiques rather than a single authoritative interpretation
Theory and Practice Internalized	The merger of theory and practice as two interdependent yet complementary phases of the change process.

Table 3.1 - The six principles of Action Research (Adapted from Winter, 1996: 13-14)

The research design produced in this study used these principles as key considerations in its construct. This process was used to assist in the

simplification of the overall research presentation and aided the researcher in providing more focus on reliability and validity in an otherwise complex array of results and data. For all the above reasons, I considered Action Research to be the most appropriate. However, there were other research methodologies considered and these are discussed next.

3.1.1 – Alternative research methodologies considered

During the research design phase, a number of other research methodologies were considered and subsequently discounted. The first of these was the use of surveys. In this context, the process is described as follows:

‘Survey research is the method of collecting information by asking a set of preformed questions in a predetermined sequence in a structured questionnaire to a sample of individuals drawn so as to be representative of a defined population’ (Hutton, 1990: 8).

The problem with this methodology, however, was it was considered as too constrictive to the research to be undertaken. The process is best suited when there is a definite end state or hypothesis to be tested. This point is exemplified by Cohen et al (2000) when they say:

‘Typically, surveys gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events’ (Cohen et al, 2000: 169).

The research process I was going to undertake would be dynamic in nature and would, by its very nature, evolve over time. It would be extremely difficult to test any pre-determined hypothesis as there wasn't one available at the beginning of the research process. No previous work had been carried out of this nature

before and my own role as a consultant would be to evolve a course of action that could subsequently be researched. Therefore, the use of surveys as a stand-alone methodology was quickly discounted.

Another methodology considered was the use of a simple Case Study. In this context, case studies were viewed as a method that:

‘....strive to portray ‘what it is like’ to be in a certain situation, to catch the close up reality of participants’ lived experiences, of thoughts about and feelings for a situation. Hence, it is important for events and situations to be allowed to speak for themselves rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher. In this respect the case study is akin to the television documentary’ (Cohen et al, 2000: 182).

However, as this definition suggests, the process of Case Study research allows the researcher to be a passive observer for the duration of the research process. In the context of my research, I would be actively involved from the outset and would purposely influence and direct some of the process in the guise of a consultant. Therefore, this methodology was discounted too.

Finally, I considered the use of a Multiple Case Study process as well. However, this was discounted for the same reasons as the single case study but also because I had neither the time nor resource to conduct such a research process. It was therefore decided to proceed with my research using an Action Research methodology as discussed earlier in this chapter.

3.1.2 – Potential procedures for Action Research

Action Research, as a research methodology, can be used in a vast array of situations. Cohen et al (2000) summarise this when they say:

'The scope of Action research is impressive. Action research may be used in almost any setting where a problem involving people, tasks and procedures cries out for solutions, or where some form of change of features results in a more desirable outcome. It can be conducted by individual teachers, a group of teachers working cooperatively within one school, or a teacher or teachers working alongside a researcher or researchers in a sustained relationship' (Cohen et al, 2000: 226).

Additionally, such is the vast array of potential uses, there is an associated array of methodologies that could be employed. This section reviews these in terms of process and methodologies.

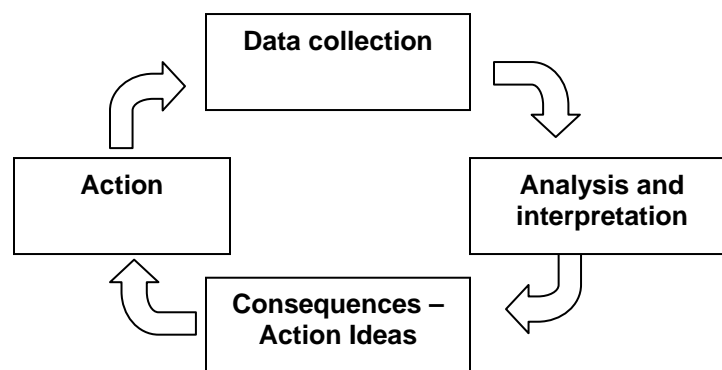
The first general theme is that any Action Research process needs to be conducted in situ and Lewin (1948) defined a 4-stage process for making this happen with the stages being: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. At the beginning, he argued that a general idea needed to be devised about the situation and supporting data obtained to reinforce this. This initial examination should, he argued, produce a plan of action to reach an identified end point or objective. This would be coupled with the composition of a set of actions developed to initiate the process. Next, would come a phase of fact-finding and investigation to monitor and evaluate the intervention. This feeds into a revised plan and set of procedures for carrying on the study. Lewin (1948: 205) therefore argues that such a process is a 'spiral' of planning, action and fact-finding about the outcomes of the actions taken.

This simple model has its critics (eg McTaggart, 1996: 248) but is the cornerstone of many further Action Research models. One such model is that of McKernan (1991, cited in Cohen et al, 2000: 235) who proposes that Lewin's original work is best represented as a series of spirals, each of which incorporates a 'cycle of analysis, reconnaissance, reconceptualization of the problem, planning of the intervention, implementation of the plan and subsequent

evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention' (Cohen et al, 2000: 235). Ebbutt (1985) adds to this view by stating that feedback is needed between the various stages, thereby facilitating reflection as part of the process.

This view is reinforced in the model of Action Research proposed by Altricher and Gstettner (1993) where they suggest four key steps. First, they suggest one must find a starting point for the research. Next, one must clarify the situation to be researched. Third, one must develop an action strategy to put this into practice and finally, one must make the teachers' knowledge public. Within this process, they suggest that steps two and three need not be sequential, thus avoiding an artificial divide that could exist between data collection, analysis and interpretation.

A further simplification is provided by Altricher (2005: 12) who represents the process as a simple model (see model 3.1 below). He subscribes also to the fact that Action Research is a combination of an intellectual process (a process of the acquisition of knowledge) and practical action (the application of this knowledge in the environment where it was created).



Model 3.1 - A simple 4-stage model of Action Research (Altrichter, 2005)

Another model of Action Research is proposed by Zuber-Skerritt (1996b) who defines emancipatory Action Research as a cyclical process consisting of:

'(1) strategic planning, (2) implementing the plan (action), (3) observation, evaluation and self-evaluation, (4) critical and self-critical reflection on the results of stages (1) – (3) and making decisions for the next cycle of research' (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996: 84).

However, despite this abundance of potential Action Research processes, this research will use a simplified version of the 8-stage process proposed by Cohen et al (2000: 235) as its basis and this model will be discussed next.

3.1.3 – the Action Research process used

The 8-stage framework proposed by Cohen et al (2000: 235) is represented in table 3.2 overleaf. This model gave me the structure from which to develop the design of my research. The research time-table previously described in the introduction to this study interfaces with it directly. Thus, this 8-stage model provided a constructive framework for the research design that I simplified into 3 stages: planning, doing and reviewing. In simple terms, phases 1-4 were used as the 'planning' phase during which I designed the research approach to be used. Phases 5-7 combined to produce the 'doing' phase when the actual process was undertaken. Phases 6 and 8 combined to produce the 'review' phase when the data collection was designed and also when data collected was analysed and interpreted. This simplification is reflected in table 3.3 overleaf.

This simplified model presented a method for me to combine the role of researcher and consultant in a way that, as much as possible, mitigated any bias or influence I may present to the project at either a conscious or unconscious level. These points are examined further in this chapter when I review general considerations undertaken during the research design itself.

STAGE	TITLE	DETAILS
1	Identification	Identification of the problem about to be reviewed.
2	Preliminary discussion	Establishment with various stakeholders that a problem actually exists and agreement that a research process can be established.
3	Literature review	Analysis of all previous research about the topic to be studied
4	Modification/ redefinition	The original research question may need to be modified on the basis of phase 3
5	Selection of research procedures	With the hypothesis established, appropriate research methods will be decided upon to meet its needs
6	Evaluation procedures	The evaluation processes for the data obtained through research will be defined
7	Implementation of the project	The project will be carried out over a period of time and will include collection of data at appropriate times
8	Interpretation of the data	Inferences, conclusions and rationale for future research will be discussed

Table 3.2 - An 8-Stage Action Research Process
(adapted from Cohen et al, 2000: 235-237)

PHASE	STAGE (according to Cohen et al, 2000)	TITLE
PLANNING	1	Identification
	2	Preliminary discussion
	3	Literature review
	4	Modification/ redefinition
DOING	5	Selection of research procedures
	7	Implementation of the project
REVIEWING	6	Evaluation procedures
	8	Interpretation of the data

Table 3.3 – Simplification of Cohen et al (2000) model of Action Research

In the context of this piece of research, the areas included in the Planning phase were my Literature Review and the development of my research aim and questions. Along with this, is my philosophical rationale for the design of my research. The main components of the Doing phase are contained in the next section of this chapter when I provide a description of the process undertaken and the rationale for the research methods used as well as a description in how they were designed. Later on in this chapter, I will describe the theoretical aspects of the Review phase when the process for this will be described. Finally, chapters 4 and 5 provide the actual data for the Review phase when the actual results are provided and an evaluation of them is made.

Additionally, Sarantakos (2003: 111-112) advises that in the preparation phase those people opting for an Action Research approach are also likely to opt for an issue that is controversial or relate to a specific problem. Thus, the perceptual leanings of the researcher may bias the research and must be controlled or mitigated. Also, during the data collection phase, the researcher must be aware of the need for high levels of respondent participation and must set the research up in such a way to enable this. Finally, during the reporting phase, a link between the researcher and respondents must be established so that a collective analysis of the findings may be obtained. This will help mitigate bias on behalf of the researcher and will also assist in the output from the study having a greater longitudinal affect on the respondent group. These aspects of the research process are addressed in more depth later on in this chapter.

3.1.4 - Critiques of Action Research

Although I have presented a brief overview of Action Research and given some analysis of the principles and procedures used in this study, it is worth mentioning that Action Research of this nature is not without its critics. This critique is particularly aimed at the emancipatory school of Action Research and is linked to the two camps of such research defined by Kemmis (1997: 177) –

reflective practitioners and critical theorists. For both approaches the term 'empowerment' is important because for the former it links to the notion of the achievement of professional autonomy through professional development; for the latter because it links to the opportunity to take control over one's life within a just, democratic society. However, this latter point has its critics because of its utopian or unrealistic view (McTaggart, 1996, Kemmis, 1997). This has meant that, in some quarters, Action Research has been 'wrestled away' from practitioners and 'into the hands of theorist and academic research community only' (Cohen et al, *ibid*: 233). So, in this research, I have been focussed in attempting to keep the focus of the enquiry grounded in reality and make sure that the direction and focus of the research and subsequent impact on respondent behaviour and operating style are always linked to practical reality and not a theoretical impossibility.

Additionally, Zuber-Skerritt (1996b: 90) warns that Action Research has four main barriers to its effectiveness. Firstly, she sees the emergence of single-loop learning rather than double-loop learning (Argyris, 1990). Secondly, there is the potential over-reliance on experts during the process itself. Next, there is the potential problem of orientation towards problem solving rather than research and development and finally there may be a preoccupation with operational rather than strategic thinking and practice. Thus, the key learning here is for the expert to facilitate' rather than 'tell' in terms of style and for the outcomes to be strategic and long-term rather than quick-fix, operational solutions.

3.1.5 - Reflexivity

A recurring theme that emerges when one investigates the theoretical framework of Action Research is that of 'reflexivity'. It is without doubt that reflection is essential to any Action Research process whether that be by practitioners or participants. Hall (1996: 29) supports this view and argues that any data collected must be authentic and reflect the experience of all participants and also

must be democratic in nature. By this, it is meant that the views of the researcher are not more valid than those of the participants.

Thus, the values of the researcher must be considered at all times as these may have a profound affect on the research if these values are left unchallenged. The attitude of the researcher in this type of research is crucial in consideration as they may have, either consciously or unconsciously, a dramatic affect on the overall impact of the process. This aspect is worthy of note here as a potential influence on the output of the research design.

3.1.6 - Summary of Section 1

As a summary, the research methodology I have chosen is one which directly links to the overall objective of the research enquiry. Although there are no other direct comparisons to draw from (because of the unique focus of this enquiry) there are other similar research projects from which I can learn. One of these is the work of Retallick and Mithani (2003) who used Action Research over an 8 week period in a school to study the impact of certain programmatic inputs on schools, 6 months after the programmes had ended. This study was based on the notion that Action Learning is an adaptive process and it is for this same reason that I have utilised it as a methodology in my research.

3.2 – The ‘Doing’ Phase of the research

Now that it has been established that an Action Research approach was the most appropriate for this study, the actual process utilized will now be described. This links to the ‘Doing’ phase of my research process as described previously on page 66. To do this, I have broken the process down into two key sections and these will be discussed in turn. First is the ‘data generation’ section when I worked with the school to establish and refine its sense of brand. Within this section, I will discuss what I did and why. The second section focuses on the

process of recording the data and will review the methods of data collection chosen and why.

3.2.1 – The generation of data

Due to the Action Research nature of this research, I had a twin role of researcher and consultant within the school. As such, I had to ensure that my strategy for development was well-thought through and aligned directly to the research question at all times. This section details what I actually did and when as well as reviewing my thoughts behind these interventions. This was made potentially more difficult by the fact that Action Research has, by its very nature, an evolutionary strategy that is constantly refined over time. To combat this, there was the need at the outset of it to provide a framework for the research undertaken. This point is supported by Kemmis and McTaggart (1981:2) who say:

'In practice, the process begins with a general idea that some kind of improvement or change is desirable. In deciding just where to begin in making improvements, one decides on a field of action.....where the battle (not the whole war) should be fought. It is a decision on where it is possible to have an impact'.

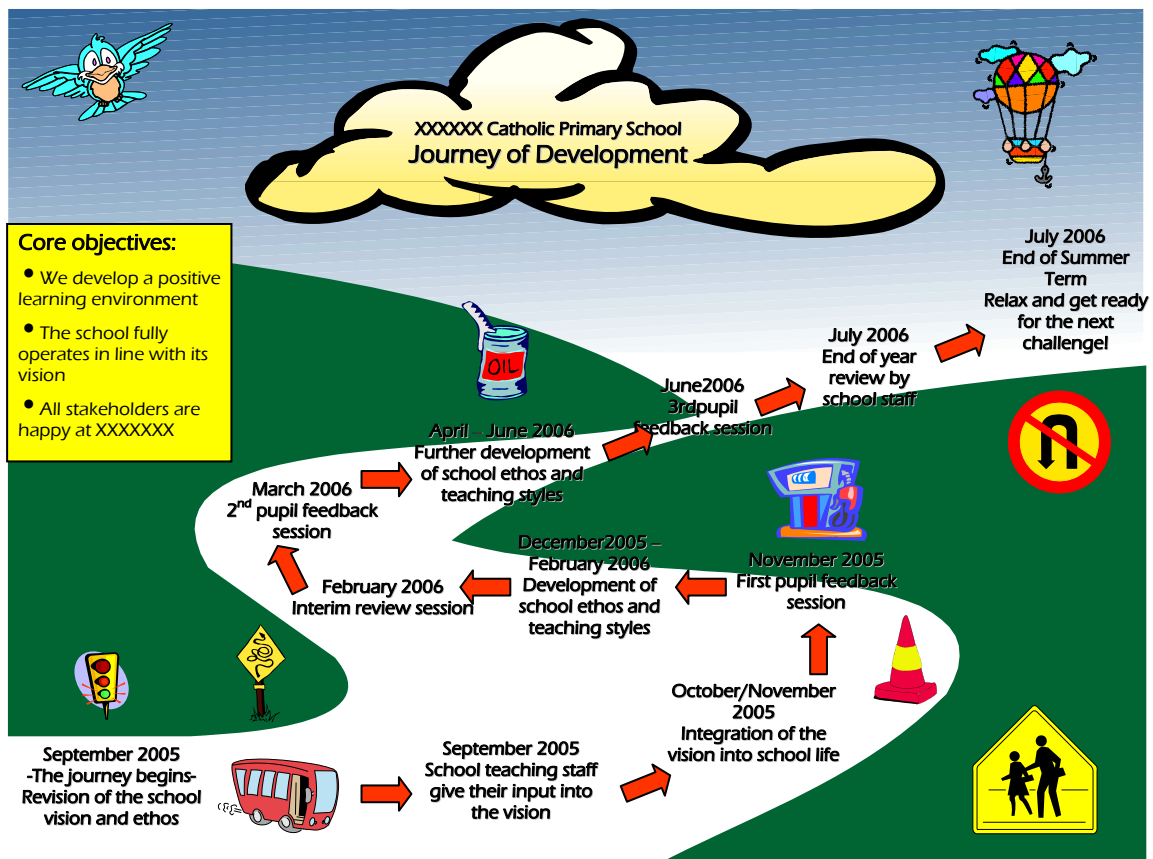
Thus, in this case, it would be easy to investigate a whole variety of issues associated with a Primary School in the UK. I therefore remained focused in my research and concentrated purely on the potential impact of a school's vision on its brand development within the teaching staff at the case study school. This aspect of my research provided data for all four of my objectives.

3.2.2 – The sequence of data collection

To ensure that sufficient data was collected during this period and allow for adequate time to be made available for the actual process of creating, refining

and embedding the notion of brand within the school, I worked with the head-teacher to design a time-table of action. This was communicated to school staff members during my first full session with the school staff in September 2005. A copy of this time-table is reproduced at model 3.2 below.

This framework illustrated the fact that the process would not be a simple, one off intervention but a series of interventions spread over a whole school year. In fact, there were four key interventions that were programmed for this period. These will now be discussed in turn.



Model 3.2 - Summary of development of school vision (as at September 2005)

The first intervention programmed for September 2005, involved all school staff and teaching assistants. This was scheduled as a staff INSET day. The focus of

the day was to discuss the existing vision at the school, review it, re-define it and then discuss how this vision was to be used within the school. As a result, the overall culture of the school was discussed in terms of current feelings and future needs. My role within this day was to facilitate discussion and present some ideas from the commercial world and my research that could be of interest to the staff and the school.

The starting point of this debate was a review of school culture. To do this I introduced the staff to a theory of school cultures based on the work carried out by Broadfoot and Pollard (2000) in differentiating between Liberal Progressive Education and Performance Education. This difference is summarised by table 3.4 on page 86.

The school staff members were asked to identify which type of culture they thought the school currently demonstrated. This was done by placing stickers on a board with the 2 types of cultures written down. The output of this is available as a photograph in the next chapter. We also reviewed the existing school vision (reproduced overleaf at model 3.3 with deletions to protect the identity of the school) and discussed the type of culture this produced. This vision was designed by the previous head teacher with the previous Chair of Governors in isolation from the rest of the school.

The staff members were informed of the vision during a staff meeting. No work was ever carried out to integrate this into everyday school life. Again, staff members reactions to this vision are summarised in the next chapter. Finally, as a result of the previous discussions, the staff were involved in a creative process to determine what the new school vision should be. To do this, they were engaged in small discussion groups to agree on what the main functional role of the school was. Then, we discussed what was unique about the school in terms of approach and ethos. Finally, we combined all of this together to produce a revised school vision. A copy of this is available at Model 3.4 overleaf.

*By putting our faith at the centre of the school life and work, we at ***** School are committed to helping the children on their journey with Christ.*

We try to foster a caring attitude among staff, children, parents and governors and this create and maintain an atmosphere of warmth in which everyone feels welcome and valued.

We aim to initiate and develop links with home, parish and the wider community.

*At *****, we strive to ensure that all children are offered the opportunity to develop towards their full potential in individual, educational, moral, intellectual and spiritual needs.*

Our school aims to be a living community of work and prayer.

Model 3. 3 – The original school vision

A happy, caring-faith community that develops the potential of every child.

'Let trust, respect and love live here'

At (School name):

- *Children are at the centre of our school life.*
- *We help them to love God and other people.*
- *We value everyone in our family, Parish and community.*
- *We teach and encourage everyone to develop their spiritual, academic and moral growth.*
- *We have fun and enjoy learning.*

Model 3.4 – The revised school vision (as at September 2005)

	A Competence Model LIBERAL PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION	A performance model PERFORMANCE EDUCATION
Schools and teachers	Invisible management with relative professional autonomy	Visible management with relative professional autonomy
Organisational form	Professional with flat management structure. Control through self-regulation, socialisation and internalisation of norms.	Mechanistic with hierarchical structure and bureaucracy. Standardisation for control and coordination.
Management style	Collegiate, with emphasis on proficiency, dialogue and consensus. Informality in relationships.	Managerial with emphasis on efficiency and target setting for results. Greater formality in relationships.
Teacher roles	Teachers as facilitators.	Teachers as instructors and evaluators.
Teacher professionalism	Professional covenant based on trust, and commitment to education as a form of personal development.	Professionalism is the fulfilment of a contract to deliver education, which is seen as a commodity for individuals and a national necessity for economic growth.
Teacher accountability	Personal and moral accountability	External and contractual accountability
Whole school coordination	Relative autonomy and informal teacher collaboration	Formal school planning with 'contrived' collegiality

Table 3.4 - Types of school cultures (from Broadfoot and Pollard, 2000: 20)

The overall purpose of this first session, therefore, was to ensure that staff members got an opportunity to discuss how they felt about the school in terms of ethos and focus. These feelings were linked to the concept of brand which allowed staff members to fully understand why were going to embark on the proposed journey and allow them to indicate their feeling about this. It also allowed the staff the opportunity to become engaged with the process of

determining the school vision so that they had more understanding of it in terms of focus, tone and purpose. As a result of this initial day, the staff appeared to be enthused and engaged in the concept of the process; they didn't know at this stage how it would happen but that was the purpose of the next session.

The second session focussed on the actual dynamics of how the vision was going to be used by the staff. This was done through a series of 'twilight' sessions (programmed for teaching staff after the formal school day had ended) with Key Stage groups operating together. Thus, three sessions had to be organised for the 2 Key Stages and the pre-school group. The focus of these sessions, held over the period October and November 2005, was to allow school staff members to discuss what the vision really meant to them at local level and produce an action plan for how they intended to reinforce this within their area of the school. Again, I acted as the facilitator of these sessions. After these sessions, the outputs were communication to all staff members by the head-teacher during a school staff meeting and then the staff members were encouraged to carry out their action plans between November 2005 and February 2006.

The third session was held in February 2006 with a focus on reviewing what had happened up to this date. This was done as a whole school staff as an INSET day and was facilitated by me. This gave the whole staff a chance to review what was working and what could be better. It also gave the staff an opportunity to exchange ideas about what they were doing and how they were addressing specific issues such as how do they engage the school pupils into this process.

To help the staff create a consistent approach to how they promoted the vision through their actions, the staff created its own behavioural charter within this session. A copy of their charter is reproduced in Model 3.5 overleaf..



Our Values

- *To respect everyone as an individual*
- *To approach life at XXXXXX in a positive way*
- *To be honest with yourself and others*
- *To always work as a cohesive team*
- *To be open to the ideas and opinions of others*
- *To communicate effectively with all stakeholders*
- *To support and cooperate with each other all the time*

Our Behaviours

- *To be professional all of the time*
- *To listen to each other*
- *To care for each other as Jesus cares for us*
- *To approach each new challenge with a sense of humour*
- *To show tolerance in relationships*
- *To be proud of our school and our achievements*

Model 3.5 - The Staff Team Charter

The creation of this Charter allowed a clear set of rules to be established within the staff room. The Charter was subsequently displayed in the staff room and used as a point of reference for the staff's subsequent actions and behaviours. Each staff member was also given a copy of it.

The final aspect of this day was to discuss the impact that the school staff felt the promotion of the vision and the creation of a distinct brand was having on the school pupils. The day was completed with the school staff developing a

collective action plan with what should happen next and by whom. The school staff members were then allowed to evolve this action plan over the period February – June 2007.

The fourth and final session was held in July 2006. Again this involved the whole school staff and teaching assistants with a focus on reviewing the whole year in relation to the impact of the vision and brand development process on the school. To do this, we repeated several of the activities used in our first session so that we could gauge current feelings about issues such as culture, ethos and teamwork within the staff-room. Examples of this include reviewing school ethos by using the Broadfoot and Pollard (2000) model (table 3.3) once more and debating the successful implementation of the Staff Charter. This allowed a comparative analysis to be made between the school staff's thoughts and feelings at the beginning of the process with the situation at the end of the year. It also allowed the staff to discuss what still needed to happen to reinforce its development in the next school year starting in September 2006.

After this, a combination of questionnaires and interviews were used to generate more data about the school staff's reaction to the process used and the impact this had on them. These processes, in terms of design and focus, will be discussed in the next section of this research.

3.3 – The research processes used to gather data

The second stage of my research design process was to decide what type of research methods would be employed in this piece of work. In order for the outcome of the previously described process to be established, three distinct methods were used. These three methods were designed to aid in the triangulation of the data and to assist in the process of refining the data described previously in this chapter.

The first of these methods was an ongoing process of data collection. This involved me as the researcher collecting and compiling data from a variety of sources during the process undertaken with the school. The second of these methods was a questionnaire presented to all members of the teaching staff to ascertain the impact of the project on them as individuals. The third and final method was an interview staged with a limited number of school staff who represented a cross-section of the staff ranging from the head-teacher, members of School Management team, teachers and teaching assistants.

3.3.1 - Ongoing data collection

Sarantakos (2003: 161) describes two classifications of historical data collection which are primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are those which 'have been described as those items that are original to the problem under study' and secondary sources as 'those which do not bear a direct relationship to the event being studied' Sarantakos, *ibid*: 161). In this study, I gathered salient data from primary sources to reinforce my research and provide more robust evidence to the item under discussion. This process links with Sarantakos's (*ibid*: 237) view that 'in conducting Action Research the participants can be methodologically eclectic and can use a variety of instruments for data collection'. He suggests a whole list of processes including questionnaires, diaries, interviews, case studies, observational data, photographic evidence and audio recording. Thus, I managed to collect a whole range of evidence using primary sources at the school as well utilising several other techniques to reinforce my thoughts and aid to the triangulation of the research. Such data collection was done on an ongoing basis throughout the study.

At the same time, because of the Action Research nature of the study, I used a Nominal Group Technique (Morrison, 1993) with the teaching staff to collect their views and opinions on specific subjects throughout the duration of the research period. In this process, one individual provides the group with a question or topic

for debate. Individuals then write down their response to this without interruption or discussion. These responses are then collected and discussed as a group. Trends are then identified within these statements or points of view and, where appropriate, these ideas are prioritised. A final discussion is then held about this issue with the final output recorded in photographic form.

In some circumstances, I used a modified technique to this whereby I divided the school staff into small groups and repeated the technique outlined above. This was a time-saving measure whereby I had a lot of items for the group to discuss within a limited time-frame. It also helped provide some variety between individual and group work within these sessions. These processes were used during the four interventions described in the previous section.

3.3.2 - The questionnaire used to survey staff

A questionnaire was used as an initial method of providing data about the impact of the project as it allowed all of the school staff to have an opportunity to be involved with the evaluation at the earliest stage. It was used as I agreed with the thoughts of Cohen et al (ibid: 245) when they said:

‘The questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher and often being comparatively straightforward to analyze’.

This fitted my needs of using a process that generated a focused response to a preset range of questions without utilizing my direct involvement. This consequently meant that I could offer the opportunity to contribute to a far wider audience.

I was aware, however, that questionnaire design is not the most straightforward of processes and I took time to ensure the design was as accurate and precise as possible. To this end, I used a sequential approach to the design as advocated by Cohen et al (ibid: 245). This process is described in the next part of this narrative. The questionnaire was used to gather data about all four of the objectives.

3.3.3 - The questionnaire design process

There were many aspects to consider when designing the questionnaire and these were deciding the operationalizing of the questionnaire, deciding on the type of questionnaire used, deciding on the question typology and, finally , defining the process for piloting the questionnaire. Each of these will now be discussed.

3.3.4 - Operationalizing the questionnaire

As part of the process of questionnaire design, the conversion of a general set of outcomes into a set of concrete, researchable fields is a vital component. This process is known as 'operationalization'. Thus, in this instance the overall aim of the questionnaire was to evaluate teacher's views about the impact of the school vision on the school and how this reinforced a concept of brand. This high-level objective gave me the direction to plan the rest of the questionnaire. I could have researched a whole manner of different aspects associated with the project such as teaching strategies or communication flows, but the specificity of my high-level objective made these redundant and provided focus in consequent design.

From this central aim, I could then divide the questionnaire into subsidiary topics that linked back to it. Knowing that the school vision broke into 3 distinct parts gave me a focus for the initial design. Whatever I produced would need to evaluate the promotion of trust, respect and love within the school. Another

objective would need to evaluate the impact of these strategies on the school. Thus, these four categories became the areas to be evaluated.

The third stage of my design process was to consider what kind of information would have to be collected against each of these categories. For instance, within the arena of promoting 'trust' within the school I could consider processes used to do this, the attitude behind promoting it, the definition used to develop it or the pupil's reaction to it. Therefore, within each of the question categories I had to be very specific in what I wanted to ascertain.

I therefore decided that, within the first three aspects of the questionnaire, I wanted to find out what the importance of this aspect of the vision was for the school and how much time was being spent on promoting it. This approach was used for defining the promotion of trust, respect and love. The final question focus was on deciding on the impact of this promotion on the school.

The process used, therefore, reflects the move from a generalized area of interest to a more specific set of features about which direct data can be gathered. This approach is advocated by Cohen et al (ibid: 246) and is supported by Wilson and McLean (1994: 8-9). Their suggested method involves identifying the research problem, clarifying the relevant concepts or constructs, identifying the kinds of measures or indicators that there are for these.

The design process used gave rise to the fact that the questionnaire used in this instance followed a clear audit of intention to ensure that there was focus, relevance, reliability and validity to it. This initial design process carried over to the next phase which was deciding on the type of questionnaire to be used.

3.3.5 - The type of questionnaire used

Cohen et al (ibid: 247) state that:

‘.....though there is a large range of types of questionnaire, there is a simple rule of thumb: the larger the size of the sample, the more structured, closed and numerical the questionnaire may have to be, and the smaller the size of the sample, the less structured, more open and word-based the questionnaire may be’.

The reason for this is quite simple. Highly structured, closed questions generate frequencies of response that are more aligned to statistical analysis. Oppenheim (1992: 115) also suggests that they also enable comparisons to be made across the sample.

The interview sample for my research was fairly limited, though, with a maximum of 24 respondents available. In this case, Cohen et al (ibid: 247) suggest that ‘a qualitative, less-structured, word-based and open-ended questionnaire may be more beneficial’. This is because this approach is more likely to capture the ‘specificity of the situation’ (Cohen et al, ibid: 248).

In this case, I chose to use a combination of approaches in a semi-structured format. To ascertain some information, I used a quantitative approach; for other elements a qualitative approach was used. The exact design will be described in the next part of this overview but the rationale behind this was to draw out specific elements of information necessary to review the impact of the brand development within the school. A semi-structured format was chosen as I wanted to set out the parameters for the questionnaire but not confine the respondents in their answers.

3.3.6 - Question typology

There is an abundance of question types including dichotomous questions and multiple choice questions. The design of the questionnaire needed to consider

the types of questions used to affect the most appropriate response. The simplest categorisation of question types lies between 'open' and 'closed' questions.

Closed questions, such as rating scales, are generally quick to complete and straightforward to code (for example, for computer analysis). They also do not unduly discriminate against how articulate respondents are (Wilson and McLean, 1994: 21). They do not, however, allow respondents space to include comments, observations or supporting evidence. There is also a risk that the categories included in such a process may be biased in some shape or form (Oppenheim, 1992: 115).

On the other hand, open questions, allow respondents to answer questions based on their own perception and reality. They will therefore write a 'free response' (Cohen et al, *ibid*: 248) that is not confined by the question designer. Such responses are, however, difficult to code and classify.

The final design of the questionnaire used for this part of the research process actually used both open and closed questions within it. This was to allow respondents time and space to articulate their own thoughts but also provide a clear assessment criteria for categories selected. A copy of this questionnaire is available at table 3.5 on page 96.

3.3.7 - Piloting the questionnaire

The final stage of the questionnaire design process was to use a Pilot process before given the questionnaire to a wider audience. As Sarantakos (2003: 260) says 'A pilot has several functions, principally to increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire'. This view is supported by Oppenheim (1992: 48) who says 'everything about the questionnaire should be piloted; nothing should be excluded, not even the type face or the paper!'. In this case,

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE VISION ON THE SCHOOL										
Please take some time to answer the following questions about the impact of the vision on the school. Your responses will be used as part of my research for my Doctoral Thesis and will be treated in the strictest confidence. Jon Baber										
Respondent's name:										
Importance How important is it for the school to focus its energy into promoting this value? Score from 1 = not very to 5 = essential Circle your response below					TRUST		Does it happen? Decide on how much time the staff focuses its attention on promoting this value at the school. Score from 1 = never to 5 = all the time Circle your response below			
1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4
Write any evidence below to support your view:										
Importance How important is it for the school to focus its energy into promoting this value? Score from 1 = not very to 5 = essential Circle your response below					RESPECT		Does it happen? Decide on how much time the staff focuses its attention on promoting this value at the school. Score from 1 = never to 5 = all the time Circle your response below			
1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4
Write any evidence below to support your view:										
Importance How important is it for the school to focus its energy into promoting this value? Score from 1 = not very to 5 = essential Circle your response below					LOVE		Does it happen? Decide on how much time the staff focuses its attention on promoting this value at the school. Score from 1 = never to 5 = all the time Circle your response below			
1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4
Write any evidence below to support your view:										
Describe how you think the introduction and promotion of the school vision has affected life for both staff and pupils at the school:										

Table 3.5 – The questionnaire used at the school

such a Pilot was achieved by given my draft questionnaire to 3 members of staff (one member of the School Management Team, one teaching member and one teaching assistant) and asking them to complete it.

I then reviewed their output and discussed their interpretations of the questions used with them. After this, some modifications were made to the questionnaire (available in its final format at table 3.5 on page 96) and it was then ready for use with the whole school staff.

3.3.8 – The Interview

The final process used in terms of data collection was an interview. My rationale for this was to increase the likelihood of both reliability and validity within this study and to make sure I had enough data to help fulfil the aims and objectives of the study. Additionally, I was impressed with Sarantakos's (2003: 267) view that:

'.....interviews enable participants – be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view'.

Thus, the interview would help me 'bring to life' the data that had already been collected and link to the notion that data is not purely external to humans but something that is generated by humans (Kvale, 1996: 11).

The process of interviewing itself has three main conceptions associated with it though and these all point to the fact that 'no matter how hard an interviewer may try to be systematic and objective, the constraints of everyday life will be a part of whatever interpersonal transactions she initiates' (Sarantakos, *ibid*: 268). These conceptions, as proposed by Kitwood (1977), are firstly a way of purely transferring information and subsequently collecting it. The next conception is that an interview is a transaction which inevitably has bias which needs to be

recognized and controlled. The third and final conception is that interviews are an encounter during which many features of everyday life are shared. As mentioned above, each of these conceptions lent themselves to the possibility of some form of bias and therefore, my main focus in designing my interview process was to ensure that, as much as possible, validity and reliability were paramount in my thoughts.

The research interview itself has been defined as:

'A two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focussed by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation' (Cannell and Kahn, 1968: 527).

It possesses many qualities which enhance the research process and Oppenheim (1992: 81-82) suggests that interviews have a higher response rate than questionnaires because respondents become more involved and hence motivated; they enable more to be said about the research than is usually mentioned in a covering letter to a questionnaire, and they are better than questionnaires for handling more difficult and open-ended questions.

However, having decided to use an interview, one of my first problems was to decide which type of interview to use as there are a disparate range of options available. LeCompte and Preissel (1993) give six types of interview, Bogdan and Bicklen (1992) eight, Lincoln and Guba (1985) give nine and Oppenheim (1992) gives ten. However, the typology I used was designed by Patton (1980) who suggests four types of interview: informal conversational interviews, interview guide approaches, standardised open-ended interviews and closed quantitative interviews. I chose this method because of the simplicity of it and also because it linked to the style of interview I wanted to conduct. The technique I decided on was the standardised open-ended interview which is described by Patton (1980:

206) as an interview where 'the exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same questions in the same order'. The advantages of this are clearly outlined by Patton (ibid: 206) and includes the fact that respondents answer the same questions which increases the comparability of response and also helps facilitate the organisation and analysis of the data. However, it does mean that there is potentially little flexibility in relating the interview to a particular interviewee and circumstances which may, in turn, limit the naturalness and relevance of questions and answers. But what I wanted was a process that gave me consistency between interviews and so this method was selected.

The interview process also had to be planned to enable maximum effect and Kvale (1996: 88) provides a 7-stage process for doing this. The first stage is one of Thematizing which involves the formulating the purpose of the interview eg the why and what of it. In this case, the 'why' was to enhance the data already obtained by my research and the 'what' was to investigate further the key objectives of the research and, subsequently, fulfil my aim. The second stage was the design of the interview itself. To do this, I used the objectives and aim of the research. This enabled me to list the topics that I wanted the interview to address. Next, I decided on the question format. In this case, I used open-ended questions as these:

'.....are flexible; they allow the interviewer to probe so that she may go into more depth if she chooses, or to clear up misunderstandings; they enable the interviewer to test the limits of the respondents knowledge; they encourage co-operation and establish rapport; and they allow the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondents really believes' (Sarantakos, 2003: 275).

The questions ultimately used during the interview are reflected in table 3.6 overleaf and are linked to the gathering of data for all four objectives:

QUESTION	RESPONSE
1. Why do you think the development of a school vision at the school was needed?	
2. How did you think it might impact you?	
3. What negative feelings, if any, did you have towards this project?	
4. What did you think about the process used?	
5. How much time do you think the school has invested into this process outside of the formal sessions/	
6. What has been the impact on: a. School staff? b. School pupils?	
7. How do you think this initiative has impacted the overall school culture?	
8. How would you describe your role in promoting the vision?	
9. In hindsight, is there anything you think the school could have done differently in this process?	
10. What have you personally learnt from this experience?	

Table 3.6 – The questions used during the interview

The next stage of the process was the setting up and conduct of the interview itself. I had direct access to the respondent group and so I selected the interviewees. To this end, the head-teacher, two members of School Management Team, two teachers and one teaching assistant were selected. This gave a sound cross section of the school staff population. The sequence of the questioning was designed to place the ‘easy’ questions at the front end of the interview and more complex, cognitive questions at the end. This would allow the interviewees to immerse themselves into the process and help me reinforce rapport with them. The venue for the interview was the head-teachers office and this was set up to limit external noise or interruption of any kind. Finally, I used a digital recorder to make a record of the interview itself for later transcription. This

allowed me to keep focussed on the interview itself and maintain the momentum and focus of this.

The fourth stage was the transcription of the interview itself. However, as pointed out by Sarantakos (2003: 281) this presents problems as the mode of data collection can influence the quality of transcription. For instance, a purely audio based record will not present information about body language for the subsequent analysis. As such, the choice of initial recoding process may filter out many important visual and non-verbal aspects of the interview (Mishler, 1986). Also, transcriptions themselves inevitably lose data from the initial encounter. The process of taking the spoken word to the written word will involve a certain degree of loss from the original to the transcript. However, because of the nature of the interview, resources available and time available the simple transcription of interview was used. I then subsequently listened again to the interview whilst reading the transcription and this allowed me to make notes in relevant places in terms of tone, speed of language and emphasis. Thus, the final version of the transcript was as close as possible to the original as I could make it.

The next step of the process was one of analysis. The process used for this will be described in the next section. The sixth stage, verification, was achieved by getting the respondents to read through my thoughts after I had written them and responding to them. By this process, I could ensure that the way their views were used were completely in line with their original intentions and not recorded out of context. Finally, the reporting of the interview has been made in the next chapter of this study along with all of the other data collected to this stage.

3.4 – The Review stage

This section provides the theoretical structure for the Review phase of my research. This will consist of review of my thoughts about data analysis followed

by my thoughts on distilling this data into a logical format to enable me to produce a model of brand generation.

Bogden and Bicklen (1992: 152) explain that data analysis in qualitative research is about the process of re-ordering, probing and arranging field notes and other data in such a way that the researcher develops a greater understanding of the data and is able to communicate the findings to others. They go on to argue that many people commence their research with broad working theories, which become progressively more focussed as the research develops. This is supported by Silverman (2001: 70) who refers to this as a 'funnel structure' or 'progressive focusing' which also links to the previous analysis of Action Research where a 'spiralling' of data occurs over time. Thus, the research position may change over time which links back to the previous discussion on defining what is to be researched earlier in this chapter.

The actual data analysis process used linked back to the original aim of the research and four research objectives. Within the plethora of data produced, I scanned the elements for key words, statements or evidence that linked to these areas.

From the workshops and Nominal Groups described earlier, all the outputs of discussions and debate by the groups were photographed. These photographs were then reviewed for salient data and selected according to their link to the research questions. The questionnaire returns were read through and key words and statements highlighted. At the same time, the scores provided by respondents were averaged so that a sense of both importance and application were obtained. Finally, the interviews were transcribed with the dialogue analysed for key words and statements, again linked to the research aim and objectives. The output of these processes is described in detail in the next chapter.

3.5 – Establishing the model

The final part of my research process was to use the data to establish a model of brand creation within a primary school in England. This was done by linking all of the core themes emerging from the research into one progressive framework. The net result of this is available in Chapter 5 where the key elements have been combined into a model and discussed.

The process for determining this model consisted of three key stages and these will now be discussed in turn. The first of these stages was the design of a conceptual framework for the process. Due to my previous experience as a consultant within large multinational organizations, I already had experience of designing and delivering training programmes to embed and reinforce a notion of brand within them. As discussed in the Literature Review, there was no precise model to follow so much of what was designed was driven by my personal experience. With this in mind, I knew that such a process for the school would have to consist of some key elements such as inclusion of all staff, engagement of the staff and adequate resources for the process.

The next stage was the actual delivery of the development process to the school. Within this stage, a reflective journal was maintained that allowed me to record what I functionally did and my perception of the results of this. This allowed me to discover what was working and what did not have so much impact.

The final stage came at the end of the research when I could reflect on the whole process and link together meaningful themes that emerged from the data collected. This was done by combining my original thoughts about the process to be used with the data contained in the reflective journal. Through this comparative analysis I was able to produce the model of development presented in Chapter 5.

3.6 – General issues considered during the research process

To enable the research to be as effective as possible, there were many issues to consider when designing the research, conducting it and analyzing the data generated. These issues concerned reliability and validity, ethical considerations and personal bias. These will now be discussed in turn.

3.6.1 - Validity and reliability

Hopkins (1989: 78-81) explains that validity is used to measure how accurately the researcher has measured what they intended to measure, whilst reliability focuses on the consistency of findings and whether a second researcher would be able to duplicate the findings to arrive at the same conclusion. Kirk and Miller (1986: 21) explain that it is impossible to 'perfectly control' any form of research and that validity will always be an issue that needs to be addressed. Cohen et al (2003: 113) explain that it is easy for a piece of research to become invalid and for a researcher to have confidence in their work, issues surrounding validity must be addressed.

To combat this dilemma, Hitchcock and Hughes (1989:106) suggest that triangulation is one of the most common methods used to enhance research validity. Triangulation refers to the use of two or more data gathering methods in an attempt to validate the theory or phenomenon under investigation. I, therefore, used a variety of methods in my enquiry to increase the prospect of validity with this research.

Finally, both Hitchcock and Hughes (1989: 107) and Patton (1990: 233) explain that 'respondent validation' is a method through which the researcher returns their findings to the participants for verification. To assist the promotion of validity in this context, respondent validation was used with the results of the

evaluation being provided to each of the participants to read and comment on. This provided support for the end report from the participants themselves.

Validity is undoubtedly an issue that needs to be addressed in qualitative research and Hitchcock and Hughes (1989: 106) argue that it is debatable whether the question of validity in qualitative research can ever be completely removed. However, it is clear that there are tools available to mitigate this factor and, through the use of the processes previously described, it is my belief that the research method proposed will be robust in its validity.

In terms of reliability, the main concern linked to research of this nature is the influence of bias. Cohen et al (2003:129) believe that the researcher must be aware of the possibility that their judgment may be affected through their close relationship with a participant group. Also, Bryman (cited in Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 77) suggests that the problem of reliability with qualitative research is that field notes are frequently unavailable and, therefore, the reader is presented with only the researcher's interpretation of the data collected. Although field notes and a reflexive journal were maintained by the researcher these do not completely remove the possibility of bias. Therefore, a subsequent process employed within the process was that of Respondent Validation.

Respondent validation will, as previously discussed, help the research be seen as both objective and unbiased. However, the fact that within the sphere of Action Research, I was both the consultant/facilitator and researcher has the potential of making any reliability within this process questionable. Thus, the research process used in this instance will have to demonstrate a variety of methods to increase the prospect of validity and reliability and reduce the impact of the dual role that I was performing. Additionally, the framework proposed later on in this chapter to combat the effect of personal bias also contributed to the increase of both the reliability and validity of the research.

3.6.2 - Ethical considerations

There are 4 ethical considerations, according to Bogden and Bicklen (1992: 54) that should be followed by researchers conducting qualitative research. These are that the researcher must protect the participant's anonymity, the researchers should seek co-operation from the participants and disclose the nature of the research, the researcher must honour any contract established with the programme's sponsors and, finally, the researcher has a duty to report accurate findings.

Stake (1996: 292) suggests that when conducting a programme evaluation, the researcher must be aware of who the stakeholders are and have an understanding of their concerns. The views of both Stake (1996) and Bogden and Bicklen (1992) are important since they highlight the fact that the researcher must be aware of the needs of both the participants and the sponsor involved with any research design. To this end, I engaged in a dialogue with both participants and sponsors to make sure that the scope of the research was understood and agreed.

The importance of dialogue within the context of any research project is expanded by Owen and Rogers (1999: 159) who believe that the researcher has a responsibility to be open and honest with programme stakeholders at all times. They suggest that the researcher should communicate freely with stakeholders and keep them updated on all aspects of the research. In particular, they explain that the scope of the evaluation must be clearly defined and agreed with stakeholders. Changes that occur during the process should be brought to the stakeholders' attention as soon as possible to maintain this relationship. This would be done as part of this process. That is not to say that Action Research does not produce its own specific problems. This is particularly true when one intends to hold a relationship with the respondents over a period of time. Kelly (1989) investigates this dynamic and suggests that the role of Action Researcher:

'....lies uncomfortably between that of internal evaluator loyal to colleagues and the school, and the external researcher for whom informal comments and small incidents provide the most revealing data' (Kelly, 1989: 113).

Although I was, and never will be, a full-time member of the teaching staff at the school I still had to be aware that my twin role meant I had to tread carefully and I had to be absolutely positive that any information I used in the study was validated and agreed by the respondents.

To combat any potential ethical issues, I used the 4 ethical considerations proposed by Bogden and Bicklen (1992) and discussed earlier in this section as the basis for my process. Firstly, the anonymity of participants was protected by using numbers against their input. Therefore, an individual will be addressed as Teacher 1 or Teacher 2 within the research. Next, participants' awareness and support was established by participants being told about the research process at the outset of the programme and informed of the nature and purpose of it. Their subsequent support was then requested. Any participant that did not want to participate in the research process was supported in their request. No-one who was potentially involved took up this option.

Next, the considerations of the sponsor needed to be considered. In this case, the research did not have a formal sponsor so sponsor's needs did not have to be considered in a normal sense. However, the nature of the research meant that the school being studied will, in theory, benefit from the experience and an active dialogue was maintained between myself, the school head-teacher and the Chairperson of School Governors. This ensured that the research was maintained within the overall direction of school development and worked alongside the needs and demands of the school. Finally, the reporting of accurate findings needs to be considered when discussing the ethical aspects of any research process. Within this aspect, it was my intention to report accurate

findings within the evaluation. As the research was for both personal development and progression as well as that of the school, it was vital that the research was as accurate as possible to allow me and the school to learn from the experience and help shape any future development.

These principles also link to the more detailed work of Hopkins (1985) who adapted previous work of Kemmis and McTaggart (1981) to produce a 12 point synopsis of ethical considerations when conducting Action Research. All of these factors, in some shape or form, are dealt with in this chapter but it is worthy of repetition that this is a highly important consideration in the overall process. Indeed, this notion is summarised by Hopkins when he says the researchers' 'actions are deeply embedded in an existing social organisation and the failure to work within the general procedures of that organisation may not only jeopardize the process of improvement but existing valuable work' (Hopkins, 1985: 135).

3.6.3 - Personal bias

As has been mentioned earlier, there is a potential conflict in this work in that I provided both practical consultancy advice and facilitation as well as the administration of the research process. To mitigate this problem, I made sure I strictly adhered to four key principles. Firstly, I ensured a high degree of accuracy in reporting. This was reinforced by using the process of respondent validation within the research. Next, I would seek to accurately interpret the meaning intended by the participants. I accomplished this goal by obtaining feedback from informants over the duration of the study to verify the informants' responses.

My third principle meant I would seek to provide an accurately derived theoretical explanation inferred from the data. This was achieved by collecting data over an adequate period. Finally, I ensured the triangulation of data by using a series of different evaluation processes.

This focus on the mitigation of bias served to present the most accurate reflection of the research and attempted to remove any doubts about its authenticity, reliability and validity.

3.7 - Conclusion

This chapter has set out the key factors involved in the design and conduct of my research. Through this narrative, I have presented and discussed my thoughts from a philosophical perspective, addressed the problems involved with the research and how I dealt with them and, finally, outlined the methods used in collecting the data for the research. The next chapter will provide the output from this process and allow for the final analysis of it in order to fully address my research aim and objectives.

4 – THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

As discussed in the introduction, the main overall aim of this Research Enquiry is 'To review how a school's vision creates its brand identity'. However, to assist in the creation of this and provide a focus for my ongoing research I used a process of operationalization to break this down into more manageable 'chunks'. Therefore, within the context of my research, the research aim was broken down into four main objectives towards which my research was focussed:

- To identify and explain the link between a school's vision and its operating ethos.
- To identify and explain a framework that makes a vision effective from a behavioural perspective.
- To identify and explain the effects of the process in terms of behavioural response.
- To identify and explain the impact of the vision on the school.

For the purpose of this presentation of the findings from the research, I will take each of these objectives in turn and produce the data relative to them that was collected during this study.

4.1 - Objective 1 – To identify and explain the link between a school's vision and its operating ethos.

This objective focussed on answering four key questions. Firstly, how was the previous vision viewed by staff members? Secondly, how did the previous vision link to the then ethos of the school? Thirdly, what was the staff's reaction to the revised vision and finally how did the revised vision affect the ethos of the school? These will each be addressed in sequence.

4.1.1 - How was the previous vision viewed by staff members?

As outlined in Chapter 3, the link between the school vision and its operating ethos, ie its brand, was initially established through a Nominal Group session with the school staff. As a result of the staff discussing the way the vision was currently used they agreed that it was not used as well as it might be. Also, they agreed that they did not really understand it. One teacher said:

'The previous mission was simply just a plaque on the wall in the head-teachers office. Nobody ever knew it. If you asked a teacher, a teaching assistant or a child what the mission was, they wouldn't have a clue. It was too wordy and wasn't meaningful' (Interview with teacher 2).

This point was reinforced during other interviews I conducted when two of the respondents referred to the previous vision. One teacher said:

'When I came to this school, there was a mission statement but it was quite a heavily Catholic based mission statement. I'm a non-Catholic and so it didn't mean an awful lot to me' (Interview with School Management Team member 1).

Another said it was previously a:

'.....list of insignificant things written on a board' (Interview with Teacher 1).

4.1.2 - How did the previous vision link to the then ethos of the school?

The relationship between the school vision and the type of ethos this created was also discussed. This discussion was designed to give an accurate starting point for the project and was focussed on producing an objective piece of evidence rather than encouraging an opportunity to negatively criticise anything that

happened in the school prior to this point. The process for this was described in Chapter 3, and the result of the discussion (in pictorial form) is displayed below.



Photo 4.1 - Analysis of school ethos (based on Broadfoot and Pollard 2000: 20) (September 2005)

This output and the ensuing discussion recognised the fact that the school ethos in place was predominantly based around a Performance Education culture as identified by Broadfoot and Pollard (2000). The staff agreed that this was reflected in the way the previous head-teacher had operated which had influenced the overall ethos of the school. It also was a result of Government

policy that had forced the school's hand towards a focus purely on results in SATs. However, the staff all agreed that the net effect of this was they tended to work as individuals, there was no real collective identity for them as a team or organisation and this meant that they did not feel they were operating to their true potential.

This point was reflected by one member of the School Management Team who said:

'It was a very different regime before. People couldn't just have a go at things because everything had to be sanctioned by the head-teacher. Therefore, if it wasn't sanctioned, then it was pulled up on' (Interview with School Management Team member 2).

4.1.3 - What was the staff's reaction to the revised vision?

As discussed earlier, the school vision was changed in September 2005 as part of the first session carried out with school staff. After this session, one member of the School Management Team commented:

'I could see the reason why this was going to be done because, obviously, with a new head teacher coming into the school, you need to establish exactly what the goals of the school are going to be. And while I think most of staff knew why they were here and what was expected of them, it had never been set out in concrete terms before. So I think it was a useful process to go through when we got an opportunity to say this is what we think our school is like, this is what we'd like our school to be, and this is how we want to achieve this' (Interview with School Management Team member 1).

Initial reactions to the revised vision were, on the whole, favourable with comments such as:

'I think when I first saw this vision I really liked it. I thought it was one of the best visions that I'd seen from businesses where I had worked in the past. Not that I'm looking at the school as a business but looking at the wording. It really made sense for this school and I loved the punch line. I think it works and it's what we should be about because it encompasses not only the religious side of it but what the school should be about: trust, respect and love. That will make the school tick if they all in place '(Interview with teaching assistant 1).

Some other members of staff were more sceptical with comments such as:

'I was a bit dubious to begin with because I thought.....I've always been in places where there's always been a vision. But that's something that's always been written in the front of every policy but no-one really takes any notice of it, or lives it. But I thought, yes, they're a good idea but it just going to be one of those things we have and it won't really affect me. It'll just be something that will be like a slogan for us. I didn't think it would have the impact it had' (Interview with Teacher 2).

It also had an impact on one member of the School Management team, who saw the revised vision as a way of re-affirming his beliefs about the school and its style. Within this context, he said:

'I was simply glad that, at the end of the day, most people's ideas were actually coinciding with my own because at that point, if it hadn't I'd have to start thinking fairly seriously about either should I be here in the first place or should I be moving on? Because obviously I would then feel if I didn't feel like we were rowing in the same direction, then I would definitely think perhaps I shouldn't be here. So it was useful for me from that point of view' (Interview with SMT member 1).

The head-teacher, in particular, liked the revised vision. He said:

'By breaking it down into a few words and some bullet points, it's provided people with something they can actually latch onto, a hook they can actually understand and therefore use amongst staff, amongst pupils, governors and throughout the school' (Interview with head-teacher).

4.1.4 - How did the revised vision effect the ethos of the school?

In July 2006, a Nominal Group session focussed on discussing the impact of the revised school vision on the overall school ethos. To maintain consistency, the model proposed by Broadfoot and Pollard (ibid) previously used for this purpose was again used. Once more, the staff members were asked to review where they thought the school was in relation to the criteria presented by this model. The results from this activity were again photographed and this output is available overleaf.

What is interesting to note is the complete change in suggested ethos of the school. Previously, the staff had felt that the ethos of the school reflected a Performance Culture; now they diagnosed the school as more aligned to a Liberal Progressive model. There are numerous factors which may influence this result and these will be discussed in the next chapter. But what is significant, is the views of the staff themselves. This is summarised by one teacher who said:

'The school is now so different. You really feel that you are valued and that anything you have to say will be listened too. It is respected and, if not agreed with, at least taken on board' (Interview with teacher 1).

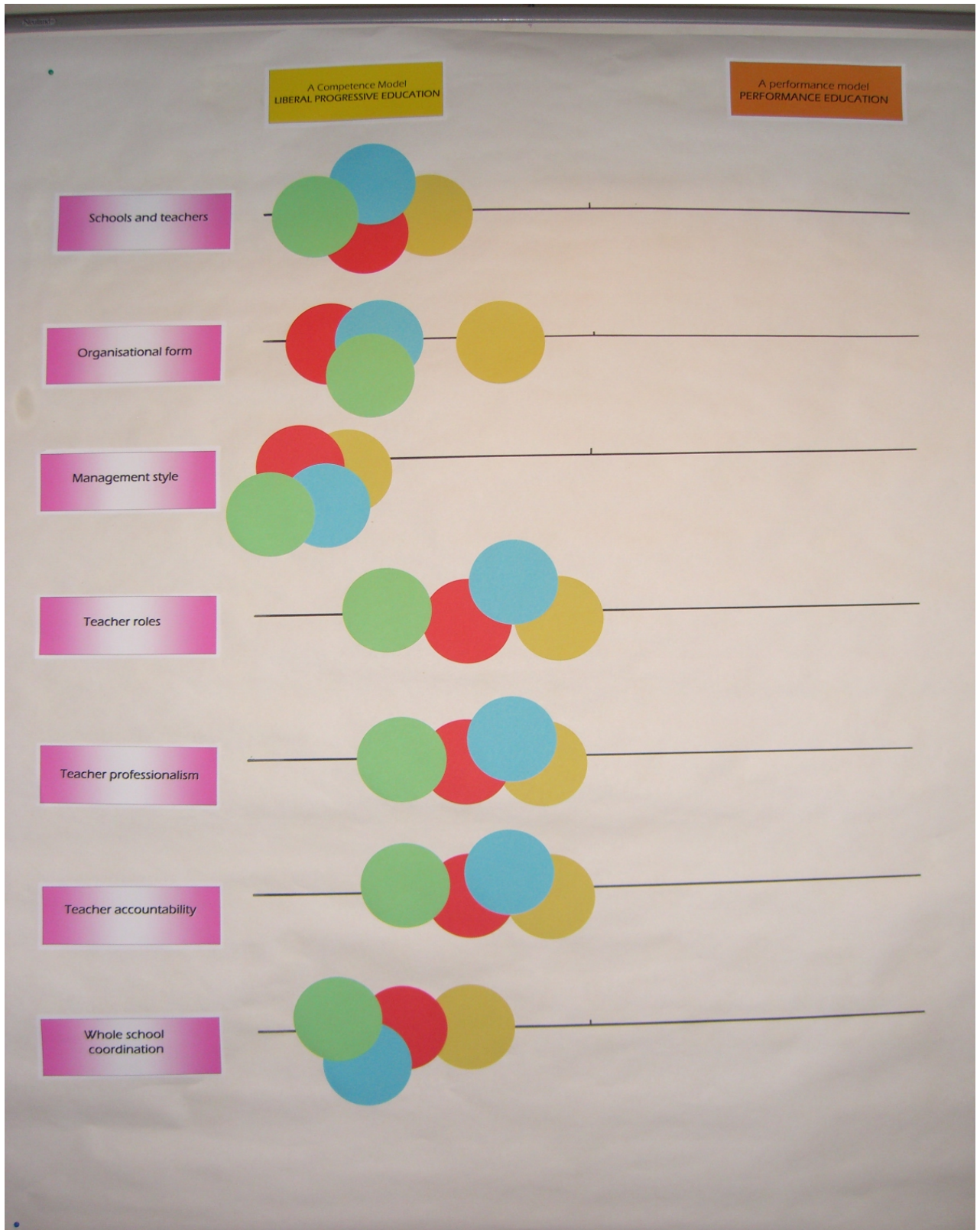


Photo 4.2 - Analysis of school ethos (July 2006)

This was further reflected by one teacher who stated that:

'The vision has given this school a sense of identity and has helped promote the unique image and qualities that we always had but which were suppressed. In turn, this has led in a short space of time to a greater feeling of belonging. We are now one big family!' (Questionnaire output from teacher 5).

4.2 Objective 2 – To identify and explain a framework that makes a vision effective from a behavioural perspective.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the vision for the school was revised during a Nominal Group session in September 2005. Subsequently, this vision was discussed at further meetings in Key Stage groups so that everyone had an input into how it would be incorporated into the daily life of the school. Thus, the process used was focussed on engaging everyone in the design of the vision and to make sure everyone had an equal stake in it. It was not deemed to be the possession of one individual; it was to belong to the whole school.

In terms of research focus, therefore, I wanted to investigate four key questions associated with this process. These were linked to my findings from the Literature Review which suggested for a vision to really influence the brand of an organisation it had to link to four main factors: it had to be inclusive in nature, it had to provide for a consistency of application, it had to involve total engagement within the process and it had to have a longitudinal focus. Therefore, the questions I wanted to address were:

- What was the reaction to an inclusive approach?
- What was the effect of an inclusive approach?
- How were people engaged in the process?
- What was the effect of a longitudinal approach?

Each of these questions will be addressed in turn and the salient research data relating to them presented.

4.2.1 - What was the reaction to an inclusive approach?

Reaction to the inclusive approach to the creation and integration of the vision was very positive. Reactions to this approach included:

'I think that nobody in the school can say that they haven't had an input into the school vision because we were all there for it. Everyone was encouraged to speak; everyone was encouraged to participate' (Interview with School Management Team member 2).

'I think it's very important that everyone was involved, including teaching assistants. They are a part of the school and they interact with children as much as we do' (Interview with teacher 1).

'When we did the school vision I thought it was really good that everybody talked about it and we came up with an agreed vision because everybody's got their known ideas, they're all so different. But also what some people mean by trust or communication is different. So talking through made it clearer and made it a whole school thing because everybody's had their own idea as to what it means but we all agreed in the end with the final result' (Interview with SMT member 1).

The general trend, therefore, from this aspect of the research was that an inclusive approach was positively received by the staff.

4.2.2 - What was the effect of an inclusive approach?

The next question addressed was focussed on ascertaining the key effects of using the inclusive approach. From this, it would appear that the main theme

linked to the notion of consistency of application by the staff. The importance of a consistent approach was emphasised by the head teacher when he said:

'It is vital that we all agree with and therefore operate in line with the vision. If we do not, and we try to engage the children with this process, it's going to be confusing for them' (Interview with head teacher).

His view is reinforced by the output of an interview with a teaching assistant who said:

'It's all about consistency. If we are not consistent in all of these things, we will not move forward. We need to make sure everyone does it all of the time' (Interview with Teaching Assistant 2).

The overall importance of this consistency was summarised by a teacher during an interview when she said:

'I suppose it's linking our governors to us in that we know what we want as a school, everybody's at the same point and we know what we want to try and implement in our classes. I mean, you can get into your class and be a separate entity from other areas of the school. This can happen from year group to year group right the way down to being in a new class on your own' (Interview with teacher 2).

In two other interviews, the individuals involved linked the approach to promoting an essence of teamwork and collaboration through the process. In one a member of the School Management team said:

'You can't do it anything unless everyone's involved and everybody's on board. There's just absolutely no point in doing it, I don't think, because you cant'

disseminate this stuff down to people' (Interview with School Management Team member 2).

In the other, a teacher stated:

'It's got to be a team thing. Everybody has to be singing off the same hymn sheet' (Interview with teacher 1).

4.2.3 - How were people engaged in the process?

This third question analyses how the school engaged its staff within the process so as to motivate them and provide a sense of momentum to it. The integration of the vision into the 'normal' working lives of the school staff was carried out by staging a series of workshops, Nominal Group sessions and local meetings. As summarised by the 'Journey' overview discussed in Chapter 3, the integration of the vision was not just a one-off event but a series of inter-linked ones.

The effect of this gradual development and integration of events was best summarised by one individual who said:

'People were saying things in those situations where they might not say it publicly in a staffroom. I found that quite useful in terms of how people thought about the school and how they thought about themselves and how they thought about what should happen' (Interview with SMT member 2).

The other advantage of this type of inclusive engagement meant that:

'...it meant that we were all sat there being informed of something we could go away and discuss it together before going away. Rather than have the teachers having it and then going away and rarely having the opportunity event to sit down with your teaching assistant. So it doesn't get fed on and you can't function like

that. Everybody's got to be able to discuss the same ideas' (Interview with teacher 1).

Finally, the head teacher summarised his thoughts about this aspect of the process thus:

'...the process really engaged us from the off into a journey that was hopefully going to allow us to better at doing our jobs. But also deliver it as a team rather than just teachers just teaching and teaching assistants doing a bit of helping. This whole programme, valuing people, valuing the teaching assistants in their role, and inviting them to be a part of the programme was the key' (Interview with head teacher).

4.2.4 - What was the effect of a longitudinal approach?

The final research question I focussed on was the fact that the process wasn't one dimensional but involved several key events over a period of time. This longitudinal dimension was significantly supported by the staff interviewed. One said:

'You can't deal with the background mind stuff if you've got the practical reality of someone running amok. You deal with the most immediate, present thing. And so it's easier to say, I think, lose track of what you're doing unless there's intervention all the way through to keep you on track' (Interview with School Management Team member 2).

Another told me, during interview:

'It's like when you go on a course for a day and you think it's brilliant and you've got all these good ideas. But other things happen....takes your mind away and you don't actually implement it. Whereas, with this process we have to keep

going back and revisiting it, kept that refocusing in us, keeping us on track and I think it's been very good to do that' (Interview with teacher 2).

Another teacher commented:

'Personally, regular intervention is the way to go because we're in the business where we have lots of things coming from the government – intervention strategies, new policies that we have to keep having to address and bring in and try out. Try out this policy and try out this intervention strategy with this year group in this subject. And I think because we go through so many changes it often gets 100% commitment and then, as time goes on, things fall by the wayside. Or you kind of forget, not completely forget, but it gets stored back in your mind and it's not so much at the forefront, and it's a long-term memory and it's only on the odd times that you pick it up. So to have it continuously it meant that we could reflect, discuss what we think worked well, what we didn't think was working well and to remind ourselves exactly where we're going really. So I like the intervention strategy because I think it's easy to have one session and then have your sheets and put them away, and file it under A and something else is completed, and we've talked about that but never actually implement it' (Interview with teacher 1).

Some also saw the period of the research intervention as not enough time. One member of the School Management Team commented:

'One of my concerns, currently, is that currently I think it's been really, really useful but we're coming to the end of the journey. What's going to happen next term? Is it going to fall by the wayside? I'm sure it won't but I think if we don't address these issues that obviously keep bubbling up each time we meet, then we could end up going back to where we were before, even though we've had all this fantastic work implemented. I guess that decision is down to us though' (Interview with School Management Team member 2).

4.3- Objective 3 – To identify and explain the effects of the process in terms of behavioural response.

The third research objective was framed around a desire to understand how the vision was lived in practice. In many organisations, a vision is a static piece of management information; it does not translate into a living reality. Was this the case at the research school? I wanted to understand how the vision was viewed in terms of these key questions|:

- How important was the vision to staff members?
- How much focus did the staff give to the daily application of the vision?
- How was the vision lived in reality?

The vision of the school was simply articulated as ‘Let trust, respect and love live here’. This was drawn from a prayer that was frequently used within the school and later adopted as the school prayer. The main piece of research data that gives an indication about how these principles were viewed came from the questionnaire presented to the staff. In total, 24 questionnaires were handed out and 19 returned giving a return rate of 79%.

In terms of research, therefore, I wanted to see how much the 3 core elements of the vision (Trust, Respect and Love) were being used within the school and how supported these principles were. This section provides research data geared towards answering these questions.

4.3.1 - How important was the vision to staff members?

Within the questionnaires, each participant was asked to ascertain how important it was that the school should focus its energy towards the promotion of the 3 key

elements of the vision: trust, respect and love. This question was answered by scoring against a Likert scale of 1 (never) to 5 (all the time).

The subsequent output would provide an indication about how the actual core components of the vision were viewed and the results are displayed below.

Importance How important was it for the school to focus its energy into promoting this value?	Number of responses	Average Score
TRUST	19	4.88
RESPECT	19	5.00
LOVE	19	4.81

Table 4.1 – Importance of the key elements of the vision

From these results, it is clear to see that the staff felt the 3 core elements of the school vision were important for the school. It is interesting to note that the scores indicate a slight priority sequence of Respect first, followed closely by Trust and then Love. What is clear, though, is there is universal agreement about their importance to the school.

4.3.2 - How much focus did the staff give to the application of the vision?

On the same questionnaire, the staff were subsequently asked to ascertain how much time the school actually focussed its energy towards those elements. This question was again answered by scoring against a Likert scale of 1 (never) to 5 (all the time). The results are shown overleaf.

Does it happen? Decide how much time the staff focuses on this value at XXXXXXXX?	Number of responses	Average Score
TRUST	19	4.06
RESPECT	19	4.32
LOVE	19	4.25

Table 4.2 – Application of the key elements of the vision

The scores for the application of these core values were a little lower but still reasonably high. They are all scoring at a rate of over 80% which would suggest that they were applied the majority of the time. It would also suggest that there was still room for improvement. These facts are reinforced by the written responses individuals made on the questionnaires.

4.3.3 - How was the vision lived in reality?

Within the questionnaire, a response was requested for each of the values to ascertain how these were lived in practice. A summary of the trends from these will now be presented.

How was the concept of 'Trust' reinforced in the school?

There were many examples cited about the application of 'Trust' within the school and these were not confined to specific areas. I have therefore selected material from the perspective of teachers, teaching assistants and members of the School Management Team.

Most teachers responding to the questionnaire, felt that that an emphasis on 'Trust' had had a positive impact. Two examples of these responses were:

'Teachers are trusted to perform their duties without the need for constant lesson observation or scrutiny of planning files by the senior management team' (Questionnaire response from teacher 2).

'I think the staff now focuses on the issue of trust a lot more. Previously, I did not feel trusted by the head-teacher. Now, I feel really engaged at the school and feel my opinion counts. I also feel I am trusted in the classroom to teach in a way that is best for my pupils' (Questionnaire response from teacher 4).

The second area where 'Trust' was exhibited was in the relationships between teachers and teaching assistants. For example, teaching assistant 3 said:

'I feel that trust is shown in the area in which I work. I am a TA. The teachers with whom I work often give me responsibilities over my regular routines. I am trusted to take the class on occasions giving me a sense of achievement and being valued' (Questionnaire response from Teaching Assistant 3).

This point is reinforced by Teaching Assistant 2 who said:

'I think the school is now more focussed on promoting trust in the school. As a teaching assistant, I felt excluded from a lot of discussions and felt that my input and opinion were neither trusted or regarded. This process has made me feel more included and trusted and this has really helped me be more positive within my work' (Questionnaire response from Teaching Assistant 2).

Finally, another Teaching Assistant gave another view that supported the above when she said:

'I feel this year that I have been given more responsibilities from the teachers I work with. I feel I am trusted to do more than my role entails' (Questionnaire response from Teaching Assistant 4).

The third group within the school who saw a definite impact of the focus on 'Trust' was the School Management Team. One member of this said:

'As a member of the SMT, I have noticed a lot of change in this school in the past year. The most profound one is how much more the staff are involved with it and feel part of it. This is down to a real sense of trust being forged between staff members. This has had an effect also on how we treat pupils. They are also trusted more and this has had a positive impact on their behaviour' (Questionnaire response from School Management Team member 2).

The head teacher epitomises this view by stating how a focus on trust has influenced his working style:

'I meet with my chair of Governors on a weekly basis and sometimes more often. We have a very honest, open and trusting relationship which I feel has benefited the school as I feel that I have nothing to hide about how the school is doing and how we want to improve. I hope that all staff can feel that they can speak to me at any time about an issue that is concerning them and feel that I have listened and done something about it if I can' (Questionnaire response from head teacher).

How was the concept of 'Respect' reinforced in the school?

Again, I wanted to view the various perspectives from which the implementation of this side of the vision was carried out. Therefore, views from teachers, teaching assistants and School Management Team will be presented.

Teachers were quite clear about the impact of the focus on 'Respect'. A typical response was:

‘Staff professionalism is respected. Every child is valued as an individual. Staff work well together drawing on each others’ expertise. The SMT supports teachers well (and on demand)’ (Questionnaire response from teacher 3).

This is supported by another view which states:

‘(The school) staff are all respected by one another. The children’s respect is an on-going element that we continue to guide them on’ (Questionnaire response from teacher 4).

Finally, teacher 2 gave a good comparative analysis when she said:

‘Coming from a previous school where the head teacher showed very little respect, I really appreciate how everyone is respected here. I also believe that, on the whole, the children at (the school) are very respectful’ (Questionnaire response from teacher 2).

The teaching assistants follow this theme of critical analysis as well. One said:

‘Respect is shown to and by staff and children throughout the school. We have recently been reminded to keep all fire doors closed in the corridor. Since this has happened, I have noticed a lot of children and other staff showing respect by holding doors open’ (Questionnaire response from Teaching Assistant 2).

Although this is only a small example of ‘respect’ in action, it gives an indication of the prevalent attitude in the school. This point is reinforced by Teaching Assistant 3 who said:

‘There is a great amount of respect at (the school). I feel we can all respect each other. Although, there can be certain issues between some members of staff, I

feel we respect each others feelings and try and deal with situations in an orderly manner' (Questionnaire response from Teaching Assistant 3).

Finally, the School Management Team would appear to echo these views as well. One said:

'Again, as a school, we are practising what we preach. Respect allows us to focus on the needs of each individual and provide for them what they need. This is true whether we are staff member or pupil' (Questionnaire response from School Management Team member 2).

The head teacher provided the simplest rationale for concentrating on this area when he said:

'Showing respect in front of children is vital so that they can mimic good behaviour' (Questionnaire response from head teacher).

How was the concept of 'Love' reinforced in the school?

This aspect of the research, again, presented quite a coherent response from teachers, teaching assistants and School Management Team alike. The main theme of this response is best described by a teaching assistant who said:

'Love is a central part of the Catholic ethos and it is what makes this school special. The fact that it is now being used as a central part of our ethos and style can only be congratulated' (Questionnaire response from Teaching Assistant 2).

This point of view is supported by a member of the School Management Team who said:

‘As a Catholic school, the concept of love should be at our centre but it hasn’t! It is now where it belongs, at the very heart of everything we do’ (Questionnaire response from School Management Team member 1).

More detailed accounts about how this notion of ‘Love’ manifests within the school is provided by a teacher and teaching assistant. The teacher said:

‘We have each child’s best interest at heart. We have excellent pastoral care. We have good relationships with parents’ (Questionnaire response from teacher 2).

The teaching assistant said:

‘As a Catholic School this is central to our faith. We show this through the way we act every day. We celebrate it in assemblies. We talk about ‘caring’ for each other and forgiveness when children have been ‘naughty’ or not show love. We also show love by having a supportive staff who teach children through their own actions’ (Questionnaire response from Teaching Assistant 3).

4.4 - Objective 4 – To identify and explain the impact of the vision on the school.

The research concerning the impact of the vision on the school was focussed on specific populations within the school environment. In particular, I wanted to focus on the impact of the vision on the School Management Team, on teachers and teaching assistants. Some of this research would, by consequence of the working relationships within the school, overlap. It would also, by association, have a potential impact on pupils within the school as well but this impact will only be included where it serves to emphasize a salient point.

The views of the School Management Team are reflected by the following statement from one of its members:

'The focus on this vision has been a dramatic one for the school. I was a little sceptical at first, sensing this was another 'flash in the pan' fad. It has been quite the opposite. The vision has given this school a sense of identity and has helped promote the unique image and qualities that we have always had but which were suppressed. In turn, this has led in a short space of time to a greater feeling of belonging. We are now one big family! I know that there is still more work to do but I also know that there is the energy and willingness to see this through' (Questionnaire response from School Management Team member 2).

Another said:

'We didn't really have a vision as such when we first came together., we just had what had been used before. Because everyone feels like they have contributed to it then there is more of a sharing. I think, in terms of singing off the same hymn sheet, we are a lot further on than before'. He goes to elaborate on this point and discuss its key impact: 'It's hard to explain really what I mean. It is all about having fun and being able to relax, and having a joke and doing some work but at the same time enjoying it. I mean there are schools where they can have as many vision statements as they'd like but nobody's enjoying themselves. And I mean the thing I've noticed about the most recent OFSTED reports is—obviously one of the questions they're asking the children is are you enjoying yourselves? And I think that's quite a telling question because children can do quite hard, punchy work and still enjoy themselves. And I think that's all to do with the philosophy of the school, it's to do with what they're actually doing and how they're doing it. The vision has allowed us, I think, to get this balance right' (Interview with School Management Team member 1).

Another aspect of the impact of this process was how it connected people to the world outside of teaching. One member of the School Management Team said:

'I'm more interested now when I got to companies and they've got their mission statement and their vision, and I'm looking at it and comparing it with ours. And I'm thinking, I wonder if they went through the same process, whether they started with a whole load of ideas and did it in the same way, or if somebody has simply written it out for them. That made me think quite a bit' (Interview with School Management Team member 2).

Also, from a managerial position, it would appear that the process had an impact on how some members of the School Management Team related to the staff. One said:

'I feel that I have learned a lot more about the staff when we were working together, their views on things which I didn't know beforehand. Their views on behaviour and how we should deal with it and things like this' (Interview with School Management Team member 1).

This point is reinforced by the head teacher who said:

'I've learned a lot about our staff. I think a lot of them have become a lot more open within the whole process. A lot of staff have got closer to each other, I think, as well. TAs and teachers who may not have met too much because of the groups that they're teaching in, have started to meet and talk and discuss things. Dialogue, it's created a lot of dialogue amongst the staff as well. It's very encouraging to hear staff talking about things other than what was on telly last night. They're actually talking about what's going on in the classroom. They talk about children learning, children gaining things' (Interview with head teacher).

The teachers, too, have a positive assessment of the impact of the process. One stated:

'I have noticed a significant difference. The vision has given everyone an opportunity to review how and what they do here. This has had an effect on both staff and pupils alike. We are now all part of the same community and there is not an us and them split. The atmosphere in the school has changed. This is a really positive place with a sense of energy, direction and fun!' (Questionnaire response from teacher 2).

This view was shared by teacher 4 who said:

'I think the school vision has provided both the staff and the pupils at (the school) with a clear vision of how we expect our children to behave' (Questionnaire response from teacher 4).

This suggested change of mindset, particularly in relation to the way staff interact with the pupils, is also exhibited by the output from two of the Nominal Group sessions. In the first, held in October 2005, staff were asked to list all the things they thought the pupils needed to do in order to make the vision become a reality. Their thoughts are recorded on the photograph overleaf. The language being used here all suggests a fairly controlling, dogmatic approach.

Then, in July 2006, the progress pupils had made in line with the vision was reviewed. These thoughts are reflected in the photograph shown on the next page. The language being used now is far more open and engaging. It all focuses on the pupils engagement with the vision rather than list a set of rules that the pupils should live by. This, in my opinion, epitomizes the teachers change in attitude during this period of research. Indeed one teacher said:

'I think nine months ago the focus was we taught the children But now it seemed that the focus was, well, actually now we almost facilitate the children, they're part of the educational experience. They don't turn up and have learning done to them. They're involved in it, absolutely' (Interview with teacher 1).



Photo 4.3 - Output from Nominal Group session (September 2005)- defining what pupils need to do to make the vision work

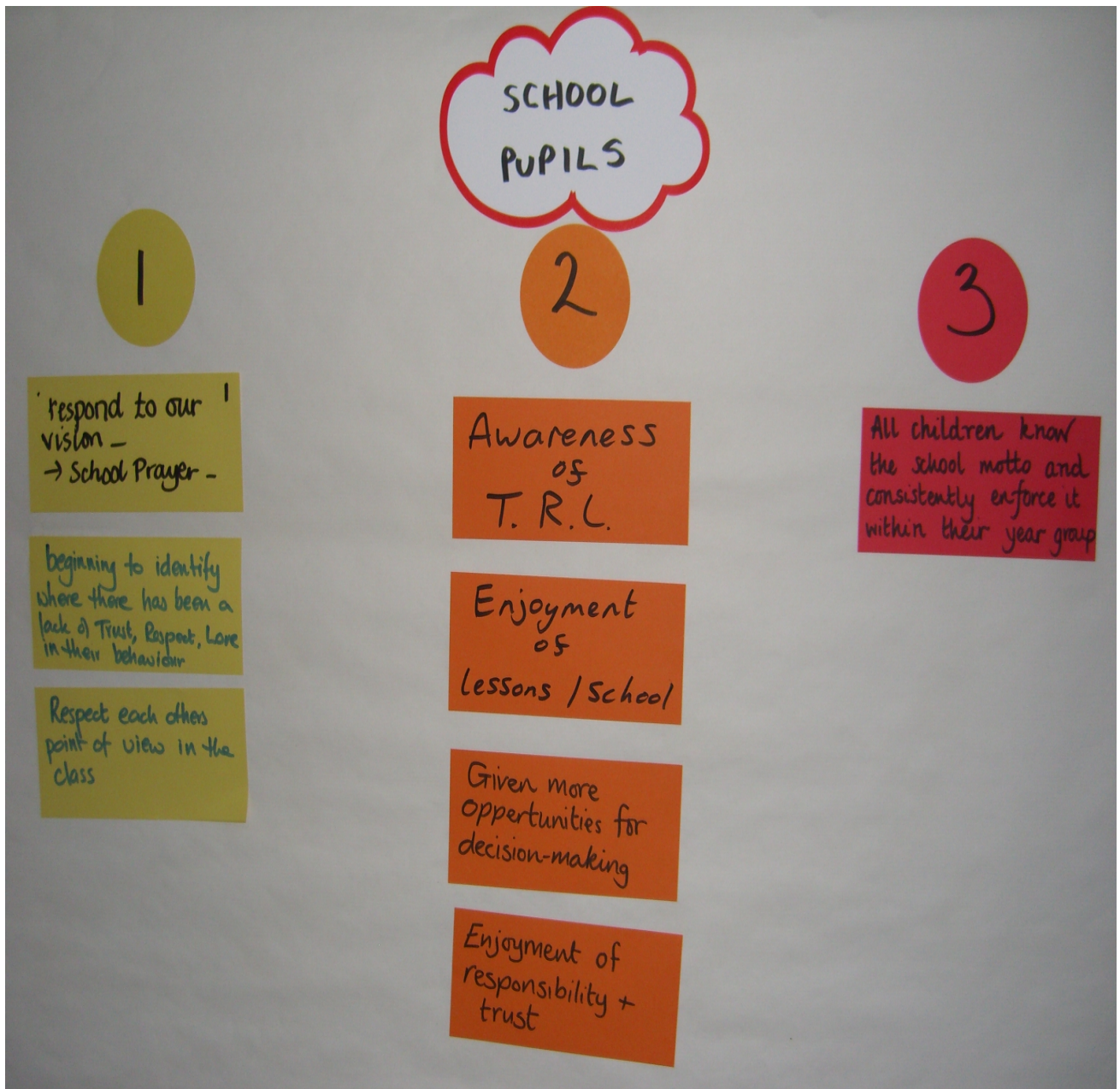


Photo 4.4 - Output from Nominal group session (July 2006)

- What have pupils done to make the vision work?

This point is further reinforced by one of the teachers during the interview I had with her. During this she said:

'Thinking from my class, I think that within year 3 our children are very good at taking on the love, trust and respect within year 3 and with my colleagues in year 3. They understand those and they know the boundaries and the rules they set for themselves in September, that we've discussed as a year group and as adults with them' (Interview with teacher 2).

Thus, the pupils set themselves their own rules and behavioural framework based on the school vision which was referred to by the teachers throughout the year. This helped the reinforcement of the vision at classroom level and was a significant change in style for the teaching staff. The impact of this enriched this teacher's view of her role within the school which she summarized as follows:

'I think as a class teacher, the children are at the centre of everything. When they come through the door, I'm here for them. I'm here to help enrich them, their learning, their behaviour, their life skills as a whole. And obviously bringing into class the love, trust and the respect focus helped them to understand why we're behaving the way we do and what are good routes to take as adults' (Interview with teacher 2).

As a final example of this element of impact, teacher 1 said during their interview that:

'.....if it's circle time and you just talk about the different behaviours, why you wouldn't behave in that way or if they have misbehaved, what haven't they done. And we bring it back to the vision and in (the school) we do this, this and this. So it's like refocusing and letting them be aware of it, and also modeling what does trust look like, what is it when you respect someone. They might not know' (Interview with teacher 1).

The other impact that the research identified within the teachers was their application of teamwork and team teaching. One teacher said:

‘ I think people share more ideas more definitely with each other, and there’s been a lot more focus this year on the school developing as a whole, I think. That’s been more noticeable. Everyone’s very committed and this has had a big impact’ (Interview with teacher 1).

This point is echoed by teacher 2 who said:

‘I know for a fact one of the things that has come from this is I’ve been doing more team teaching with (a teacher). That’s made a huge difference to sit there and bounce ideas off somebody and to discuss different ways to tackle activities and subjects. And it does relieve the burden sometimes as well because you do get mind boggled when you’re sat on your own, trying to think of a lesson to cover everything and all the different children’ (Interview with teacher 2).

As a final point, from the teacher’s perspective, one teacher succinctly summarized the net effect of the impact of the vision when he said:

‘It has been made clear to visitors and outside agencies that this school has a vision and core values and that these are expressed in everything we do’ (Questionnaire response from teacher 5).

Finally, the key trend from the review of the Teaching Assistant’s questionnaire responses and from the interviews conducted with some of them was the importance of inclusion within the school. Nearly all of them, who responded, all alluded to this fact in some form or another and connected the increase of their inclusion within the school to the development of the vision. One Teaching Assistant said that before the focus on the vision had happened she ‘was quiet as a shrew and kept my head under the parapet because if you came up you got shot off’ (Interview with Teaching Assistant 2). She had noticed a difference whereby now:

'....there's more doing more because I think they are accepting there's more to be done as a part of the team. They can get involved more. Maybe that's a trust and respect thing. Maybe they're given more trust and respect' (Interview with Teaching Assistant 2).

Another Teaching Assistant elaborates on this point when she says:

'The development and promotion of this vision, with us a staff at the centre of the development has led to a greater sense of unity within the staff. This means we now share ideas and talk more. It could be still improved though and I think we could use staff meetings even better to develop this further. However, I know we are on a journey as (the head teacher) keeps reminding us and I have to be more patient! So far though the impact has been dramatic and I feel part of a community of learning that trusts, respects and loves everyone involved with it' (Questionnaire response from Teaching Assistant 4).

Some of the Teaching Assistant's also had seen a dramatic impact on the pupils of the school. One wrote:

'The introduction of the school vision helps everyone to work towards the same goal. I feel the children of (the school) are learning the meaning of Love, Trust and Respect. I have noticed the children within my year group respecting each other others belongings, picking up coats and bags. When any of the children fall out with each other, myself and the teacher often use the words 'Love, Trust and Respect' according to the problem arising. We try and encourage the children to think about the feelings of others. Having the school vision helps keep teaching staff and the pupils focusing on how we want our school to be. When children return to school in September, they will be able to continue the school vision in their new classes and continue until they leave (the school). (The school) has

become a more friendly place to work where members of staff are more equal'
(Questionnaire response from Teaching Assistant 2).

The final piece of research data from the Teaching Assistants, I feel, quite neatly summarizes the overall feeling towards the introduction of the vision and its impact. This is drawn from a questionnaire response and it states:

'We are singing from the same hymn sheet. We are all working together towards the same vision because we have shared this with each other and with the children' (Questionnaire response from Teaching Assistant 1).

4.5 - Conclusion

The above remark concludes my presentation of the research data. I have focused this chapter towards drawing data from the research that answers my original research questions. This, in turn, has generated several key trends and has given rise to the need for further debate about some of these issues. These will now be addressed in the next chapter that will focus on discussing the key learning from this data.

5 – A DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Within this research I have maintained a focus on my overall aim which is ‘To review how a school’s vision creates its brand identity’. From this aim, sprang four main objectives which provided the way-markers for this study:

- To identify and explain the link between a school’s vision and operating ethos.
- To identify and explain a framework that makes a vision effective from a behavioural perspective.
- To identify and explain the effects of the process in terms of behavioural response.
- To identify and explain the impact of the vision on the school.

This cascade of objectives provides a focus about brand that is not linked to just logos or trade marks but the very essence of the brand itself; it’s people. In terms of a school, I wanted to find out what made a school unique and how could that school promote that uniqueness in a world of market competition and fragmentation. In short, I wanted to be able to define a school’s brand and use this to lever cultural alignment within the school. This final chapter reviews the results of my study and presents the findings I have gained from it. To do this I will take each of my objectives in turn, and discuss them against the research data generated by the study. I will then review the output of this research against the some of the existing literature within this field. Finally, I will combine the output from this research to present a model of brand development that could be used as a basis for subsequent research or the development of a brand within a school.

5.1 - Objective 1 - To identify and explain link between a school's vision and operating ethos.

In the past two decades, organisational leaders have begun to use words like 'mission', 'vision' and 'values' almost with religious zeal. These link to words such as 'purpose', 'strategy' and 'objectives' used in previous decades. To all intents and purposes they are the same thing. The difference is the connection between their application and human engagement and motivation. In my research I wanted to see how a vision could either create a positive work environment or reinforce a negative one. To this extent, I wanted to ascertain within the case study school what its purpose was. I wanted to know whether people knew what they were there to do. I also wanted to review its vision and see whether people really knew where the school was headed in the long-term. Finally, I wanted to see if this cascaded down into a set of values by which people lived their normal working lives. Because it is the combination of these three factors (purpose, vision and values) that creates the internal brand of an organisation – ie its operational ethos.

Although a purpose or vision has to be created, values exist in every organisation whether they are good or bad, positive or negative. It is said that:

'...the most difficult of the three to develop is the vision as this requires imagination and a bold view of the future' (Davidson, 2005: 18).

In the case of the case study, all three elements were demonstrated by its revised vision. These are summarised on table 5.1 overleaf.

The key thing about this revised vision was it was easy to understand. It made sense to people and was memorable. Also, it aligned to the core values that were already being promoted within the school. In short, it told people what they were about, where they were going and how they were going to get there. However, a

vision by itself won't provide change, alignment or motivation. It needs to be supported by action and support if it is going to succeed.

PURPOSE	<i>A happy, caring-faith community that develops the potential of every child.</i>
VISION	<i>'Let trust, respect and love live here'</i>
VALUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Children are at the centre of our school life.</i> • <i>We help them to love God and other people.</i> • <i>We value everyone in our family, Parish and community.</i> • <i>We teach and encourage everyone to develop their spiritual, academic and moral growth.</i> • <i>We have fun and enjoy learning.</i>

Table 5.1 - The purpose, vision and values of the case study school

*By putting our faith at the centre of the school life and work, we at ***** School are committed to helping the children on their journey with Christ. We try to foster a caring attitude among staff, children, parents and governors and this create and maintain an atmosphere of warmth in which everyone feels welcome and valued. We aim to initiate and develop links with home, parish and the wider community. At *****, we strive to ensure that all children are offered the opportunity to develop towards their full potential in individual, educational, moral, intellectual and spiritual needs. Our school aims to be a living community of work and prayer.*

Table 5.2 - The previous vision at the case study school

One can see this in action if one views the previous vision used at the school which is reproduced at table 5.2 on the previous page.. This was a real example of how not to do it! It was produced in isolation, communicated through a one-way process and also, as a piece of work, confused the elements of purpose, vision and values into a 'messy' construction. The work was also couched in the language of managerialism which, on the whole, didn't mean anything to staff members. It certainly wasn't something that could be used easily with the pupils of the school, whereas the concept of 'Trust, Respect and Love' which formed the core of the revised vision could.

When one compares the two visions and the approaches used to create them, one also has to review the leadership styles of the two head teachers. The previous head teacher at the case study was, by reputation, a very controlling person that liked to be involved with every aspect of school life. She would be concerned with absolute minutia and did not promote an environment of trust within the school. This point of view was driven by the output of interviews and conversations with staff members. The new head teacher was the complete opposite to this. As a consequence, it is easy to link the leadership style of the head teacher into this process and this is reflective of many organisations. Those organisations that have the most obvious link between their brand, its vision, values and operating style have a leadership team in charge that is inclusive, innovative and challenging in style (Davidson, 2005). However, the purpose of this research is not to identify characteristics of leadership but to review a process for creating a brand so this aspect will not be dealt with in any detail here.

The other point to bear in mind at this stage is the school staff's reaction to the new vision. They were extremely positive towards this and warmed towards its simplicity, focus and connection with what they believed the school was all about. These concepts are related to the following quotes about the relationship between visions and people:

'A vision must provide people with the feeling that their lives and work are intertwined' (Lipton, 1996: 38)

'Visions provide the opportunity for individuals to grow and achieve on a grand scale' (Kirk, 1992: 43)

'A living company will have members who believe the goals of the company allow and help them achieve their own individual goals' (De Geus, 1997: 27)

All of the above quotes link to the fact that a vision will only succeed if it has some form of resonance with the people who are going to embrace it and live it. The overall emphasis of all three of the above pieces of research suggests that a vision is not a cold piece of managerial creation. They also point to the fact that it is not something that has to be done so that the normal day job can be continued or is it something to put into place for the sake of it. They all suggest that it is a key piece of organisational architecture that breathes the very life and soul into that organisation. What they all agree on is that without an effective vision, any organisation will not be able to operate to its true potential. Indeed, without an effective vision, it is difficult to have an effective brand.

5.2 - Objective 2 - to identify and explain a framework that makes a vision effective from a behavioural perspective.

I knew from the Literature Review that there were some key components of any brand development process. Those elements of literature that linked brand development to the behaviour of employees within an organisation suggested that such a process must be inclusive in nature, longitudinal in approach, must promote a consistency of application and must result in the total engagement of employees. These were the factors that I wanted to research within the process undertaken by the case study school to see what effect these elements would

actually have. My rationale for this was the fact that previous literature told me that these elements needed to be in place; no piece of literature told me what would be the effect if they were and, indeed, how to do it! This was especially true in the world of primary school education.

Based on this research, I would say that the most important factor in this process was the longitudinal approach. This enabled the vision to be constantly revisited and kept the conversation alive. If the 'Journey' planned by the school wasn't followed, then the vision would not have been so effective in its application. According to the data presented in the previous Chapter, the teaching staff all thought that the implementation and evolution of the vision all would have been buried under the deluge of initiatives from Government, LEAs and the teachers themselves. So a key learning point from this research was, if schools are serious about establishing their own brands based on a compelling vision, it takes time. Not big chunks of time but regular time. It needs to be something that is a regular agenda item. It can't be something that occurs in a 1-day workshop and then forgotten about.

Then, almost as important, was the importance of an inclusive approach. This notion of inclusivity meant everyone had their say at all the key stages of the process. This was particularly true in terms of the Teaching Assistants. The research shows that this approach meant that they felt more valued as well as adding to the overall consistency of message in the school. To have worked purely with teachers and the School Management Team would have been desperately divisive and would have led to a lack of engagement from the Teaching Assistants.

The next most important aspect is having a common behavioural framework by which to live the vision. In this case, we used the Team Charter to do this. What was interesting from my research was, once the vision had been agreed by all the staff and the core values established, there was then a clamour for a

behavioural framework by which to operate. This is where the idea for the Team Charter came from. The teaching staff needed to have something by which to review their progress and give feedback to each other. Therefore, the Team Charter was designed shortly after the vision was agreed. This whole process was geared to making sure the vision was clearly understood and owned by the staff. The research data generated at this stage suggests that this was clearly the case and that the approach used enabled them to consistently review and amend their practice in line with the vision.

The net result of all of the above was that the whole school was totally engaged in the process and felt ownership of it. Again, the research data suggests that there was real enthusiasm and passion for the initiative. It wasn't just one of those things that they had to do. It was something that they wanted to do. This, despite the initial scepticism of some within the teaching team. Thus, the project seemed to build up a momentum of its own and it would be interesting to revisit the school and gauge how it is now performing in line with the vision. This is, perhaps, grounds for further research at a later date.

One thing that wasn't measured directly within the context of this study was how the vision also related to other aspects of school life. As a Primary school within the English state system, the school was compelled to produce various pieces of organisational literature including a School Business Plan and Self-Evaluation Form. What was interesting to note, within both of these documents the main focus of the narrative was linked directly to the establishment, promotion and development of the school vision and its values. Thus, through this process the development and integration of the vision became part of the formal development of the school as well. It wasn't something being developed in isolation. It had become an integral part of the school.

5.3 - Objective 3 - to identify and explain the effects of the process in terms of behavioural response

In his book 'The Committed Enterprise', Hugh Davidson (2005: 157) talks about eight forms of communication within any organisation. These are actions, behaviours, face to face conversations, signals, products and services, advertising, word of mouth and comments by other organisations. Based on this analysis of organisational communication, the research data collected suggests that out of these eight, five have been directly affected by the process. The first of these is the actions carried out by staff members. From their responses, it is clear that the way they now operate as a staff is different from where they started. They are now more collectively focussed, have a greater sense of cohesion and operate as a team. They know they are strong as their weakest link and actively support to promote and reinforce the vision at every opportunity.

Next, they also have a focus in terms of behaviour. They acknowledge that they are important role models for the effective application of the vision to the pupils within the school. Therefore, their own behaviour is being scrutinised at all times by each other and by people who come into contact with them. They seem to relish this focus, however, as it aligns to their collective sense of what they should be doing as teachers.

The third element which links to this model is their face to face communication with each other. Because the level of trust has apparently increased within the staff room, the quality of communication has also increased. In the previous Chapter there is an abundance of data that suggest the school staff are now talking in a more open and honest way with each other and this has increased the standard of debate within the staff room. The fourth element is the use of signals. In the context of a school, this could be the way pupils behave and play. Again, the data presented in the previous Chapter has shown that both teachers and teaching assistants alike feel that the change in their style has had an impact

on the pupils within the school with many aspects of positive behaviour being linked to the consistent focus on the vision.

The final element is the way they present their product or service. In this instance, this links to the way they operate within the classroom. The research again demonstrated that the way they now interact with the pupils has changed in order to reinforce the vision with them and get them to take more ownership of their own actions. Before this process, behavioural disputes were settled arbitrarily by teachers with no central theme to their actions. The vision now ensures that behaviours within the school are aligned to a central philosophy which leads to a greater consistency of style by the staff.

The three which aren't directly connected to the research (advertising, word of mouth and comments by other organisations) have all been affected by this process but the information relating to this impact is anecdotal and not directly linked to the research process undertaken. They may be areas to consider for future research.

Davidson (ibid: 161) goes on to look at the effect of a mismatch between espoused values and behaviours. He cites the example below:

Espoused Values	Actual Behaviours	Communication
Treat everyone with respect	Tolerate bullying	Management doesn't care about the values
Unimpeachable integrity	Allow bribery	
Superior service	Accept mediocre customer service levels	

Table 5.3 - When values aren't matched by behaviours
(Davidson, ibid, p161)

What he is saying supports the old maxim of 'actions speak louder than words'. He states that:

'Behaviour is one of the most important communicators of values, especially affecting people, quality and integrity. News about behaviour makes good conversation, and spreads fast by word of mouth or e-mail. Mismatches between values and behaviour are soon picked up' (Davidson, ibid: 162).

What is interesting to note from the research data is that, as well as actively employing strategies for the effective communication of the vision through a multitude of channels, the staff also 'lived' the vision on a daily basis. This is the strongest type of brand reinforcement whereby the ideals associated with a specific brand or ethos is reinforced on a daily basis and as a matter of routine. These actions therefore get embedded into the normal working practice of the school which helps the positive engagement of all involved with it. It will particularly help any new members of the teaching staff entering the case study school to understand and align to these values and ideals in a short space of time. Thus, the vision will live on as it is enshrined in the behaviour of school staff members.

5.4 - Objective 4 - to identify and explain the impact of the vision on the school

This aspect of the introduction of the vision was to review its impact across the whole school from the perspectives of teachers, teaching assistants and School Management Team. The reason for this is that it is easy to assume that there could be a potential mismatch in the reaction to such a process. For instance, in some organisations I work with the Stock Exchange have a high opinion of the company whereas employees may hate working there! What I wanted to find out was the perceived impact of the vision across the board at the case study school. If the reaction was positive throughout and the key stakeholders could see the benefits of it, it was a logical step to assume that the process had had a positive impact. Obviously, I did not include all the potential stakeholders directly within

this process. At a later stage, parents, pupils, Governors and LEA members could be interviewed. But, for the purpose of this study, I wanted to ascertain the impact on those individuals concerned with the delivery of teaching at the school.

The research suggested that the process used to introduce and develop the vision within the school was positively received across all three of the stakeholder groups interviewed although their reactions were slightly different. This is not surprising as they would be looking at the process through completely different lenses. This fact is better understood when one summarises the way each stakeholder group described the impact the vision had on the school presented in the previous Chapter.

One trend that was apparent between all three stakeholder groups, however, was the impact the vision had in the alignment of the school. They all agreed that the vision had provided them with a clear sense of direction and focus for their work. As a result, they all believed that they were more cohesive as a team and presented a more united front to the world.

From this, the emphasis of the School Management Team then became slightly different to the rest. Their answers tended to review the process from a more strategic angle. They talked about the environment that the process had created and how this had been perceived as a positive. They also talked about how they now looked at external organisations and considered what they were doing to create and reinforce their own brands. Finally, they talked about the way that the process had affected people within the school; increased levels of focus and teamwork as well as generating greater emphasis within conversations on learning. Thus, most of their emphasis in terms of impact was on how it had affected either the school or the teaching team. It was a review very much in the third person.

The teachers, however, focussed their reaction on the immediate application of the learning from the process. They talked in practical terms about how the process had got them working together with other teachers and how their relationships with the pupils had been affected. They also talked about how the process had given them a consistency of style and gave examples of the benefits of this. Finally, they talked about the impact of the process on them personally in that it had created a positive, fun environment that had a real sense of energy within it. Thus, their review was very much centred on the immediate impact it had on them from a professional dimension.

Finally, the Teaching Assistants reviewed the process from almost a purely personal angle. They talked about how much more included they felt and the impact of this in terms of personal motivation and engagement. They also talked about their increased sense of self-worth and the value that they were now allowed to add to the school through their increased contribution.

The research, therefore, emphasised the fact that all stakeholders within a project such as this will review the impact from completely different perspectives. What is obvious is that all of the stakeholder groups included had a positive reaction to the process. What is more interesting is that their emphasis, on the whole, is so different when one breaks it down into key trends. Thus, the key learning from this is that a process such as this must be engineered in such a way as to include and engage all stakeholders within it on terms that makes sense for them. A 'one size fits all' approach would not, potentially, have had the same effect.

5.5 – Linking the research findings to existing literature

In Chapter 2, relevant literature that linked to this research was reviewed. I will now compare the data obtained from my research with this original literature in order to reflect whether the theoretical claims made by that literature was actually

observed in practice. I will do this in two stages with the first focussing on literature pertaining to education and a market-based system and the second to literature about brands.

5.5.1 – Education and a market based system

One of the first observations I want to make relates to the work of Ball (1994: 146) when he claimed that a market based education system would result in the 'system of morality taught by schools (being) increasingly well-accommodated to the enterprise culture'. By this he meant that schools would naturally evolve into breeding grounds of individualistic, competitive and entrepreneurial young people who would further entrench the New Right style of thinking in England. The role models for this style of thinking would be the schools themselves. This research demonstrates that this does not have to be the case. Having a clearly articulated vision that emphasizes a relevant and morally positive set of values has meant that whole staff now models this way of behaving to the pupils who are, in turn, responding to it. Thus, one of the results of a clear sense of brand, if designed in the right way, is actually to preserve those values held as positive in England rather than dissolve them.

Olssen (2004) reflected on the fact that a market based education system results in the de-professionalism of teachers, a rebirth of managerialism and the development of a culture of mistrust within schools. Again, this research demonstrates that this does not have to be the case. When a school's operating ethos is set up to reflect a culture of trust, professional engagement and a balanced curriculum, the consequences presented by Olssen are nullified. Schick (1996) supports Olssen's views and says that the creation of a market based-system that reflects only self-serving interests has to result in the weakening of collective interest and cooperative activity. Again, this research demonstrates that this does not have to be the case.

What is true that, within the school in question, the understanding of what marketing is and how this should be done was limited at best. These points reflect the research carried out by Oplatka et al (2002) and Foskett (1999). However, by taking all of those elements that the school did anyway in terms of behaviour and attitude, albeit not actively supported or promoted by the previous Headteacher, and then promoting them gave licence to the daily exhibition of these factors. This 'internal marketing', i.e. consistently promoting the brand through daily action, links to research carried out by Hardie (1991). It also links to the work of Foskett (1998) who reflected on the fact that fully motivated staff expressed higher levels of commitment to 'marketing'.

The process employed within this research also links to the Marketing Triad model proposed by Foskett (2002). Within this, Foskett argues that schools must focus on one of three elements to allow them to create a marketing plan: internal quality issues, community communication issues and pupil recruitment issues. It is my contention, based on this research, that these three elements actually form a hierarchy. First, internal issues must be resolved to present a clear understanding of self and differentiation for the school. This creates a sense of internal brand. Next, this notion of brand must be communicated to the educational community in which the school sits e.g. parents, LEA and Governors. Finally, these two factors will combine, to enhance the desirability of the school and thus make pupil recruitment easier. This process is supported by the work of Wheeler (2006) and is the one used by Orange in creating its brand image. First, the organisation makes sure that every Orange employee understands the vision and values of the organisation and models them on a daily basis. They use the strap-line 'You have to be Orange on the inside before you can be Orange on the outside'. Next, they communicate this image to the outside world through advertising and marketing that reflects their brand image. It is noticeable that they never market products but always benefits and this reflects their customer-centric brand. Finally, through this process, they attract more customer growth. They are now the second largest mobile communications provider in the UK and,

with them being part of France Telecom, are the second largest provider in Europe.

5.5.2 - Brands

The key research here is that of Miller and Muir (2004) who say that a brand is the result of two things: that it is a result of behaviour and it exists only in people's minds. Therefore, branding is not just about crests, logos or school environments. Unfortunately, this was the output of research carried out by Foskett (1992) in three schools in England but this was at a time when the concept of branding was not as widely researched. The principles put forward by Miller and Muir (ibid) do link directly to the stance of this research though in that the brand was created by the behaviour of school, staff and this will subsequently be reinforced by reflection in school processes, external material and actions.

Also, Grant (2000: 169) writes that: 'Old Marketing was external while New Marketing deals with ideas – brands – that are change agents both inside and outside the business. For this to be true, there is another kind of authenticity to which marketers need to embrace. As Shakespeare wrote, 'To yourself be true'. New Marketing must be true to the vision and values of the company'. It is this principle that was used throughout this research to enable a sense of congruence to be achieved between what the school said and what the school did thus producing a sense of consistent brand image.

The other piece of research that is worth highlighting, again with regard to this research, is the work carried by Aaker (2002). He suggests that there are eight key elements to brand building and all of these were reflected in the process undertaken. First, he says brand building is not just about advertising. This means that the sense of brand is more than a glossy brochure and is actually an attitude that is reflected throughout the school. This was apparent as a result of this process.

Next, brand building involves innovation or doing things differently. The school did think differently in that it preserved the elements it thought were vital to its sense of identity and then changed those elements that, at the beginning of the process, did not support this notion. The third element presented by Aaker is that excellence in execution creates huge payoffs. The school focussed on what it needed to do and then made sure it did them really well.

Fourth, Aaker says that products are the key to a brand. By this, the school knew that its ultimate service was the provision of education for its pupils. This had to remain central to the strategy of the school. The fifth element presented by Aaker seems to conflict with this point, however, when he says that brands are more than its products. But in this case, the difference is clear. Every school delivers education; how does this school do it differently and add value to the experience? The brand creation process allowed the school to identify this difference and make it the central element of its brand.

Next, Aaker says that the brand identity needs to be known. The sense of brand has to be shared throughout the organisation and this was done at the case study school. By using INSET days and twilight sessions everyone on the school staff was involved in the process and knew full well what their role was in making it happen. This links with Aaker's seventh element which is that the team should run the brand. Again, this process was done through collaborative facilitation and the involvement of all the members of the school staff.

Finally, Aaker says that the brand should connect with people at an emotional level. This was done at the school by preserving the core elements that the staff thought were vital to the school's success and discarding anything that did not assist this. The net result was a simple sense of brand that could be understood, and therefore applied, by everyone within the school including the pupils.

5.6 - Pulling it all together – developing a sequential model of brand development for a Primary school

At this point the key trends generated by the research have been identified and analysed. What I now want to do is draw this learning together and present a sequential model that links this learning together into a coherent pattern that could be replicated in other schools.

One of the most curious aspects of focussing on this study was the fact that were many references that suggested what, in theory, a brand is, what it was about and what makes a brand good or even great. Many of them focussed on the marketing strategy to achieve this. It was more difficult to find a book or piece of literature that actually told you how to do make that brand 'live' within an organisation. That is, how to make sure individuals within an organisation behaved in a way that was congruent with the values of the brand on a day to day basis within an organisation.

Therefore, what I wanted to do as a result of this study was produce a schematic model that links the key learning together to provide a practical framework for establishing a clear brand identity within a school. This model links together the process actually carried out with the data produced by the research to support it. The key themes and stages have been identified and linked to produce a 6-stage model of development. This model is produced at table 5.4 overleaf. I will discuss each of the 6 stages in turn in relation to the study and the data generated by it.

5.6.1 - Stage 1 – Understanding the organisation

From the data initially collected it was obvious that the school, at the start of the process, was not operating in a way that was unique, different or exceptional. It was just existing and producing work of a reasonable standard. However, the

data collected from staff members suggested a school that was out of touch with its key stakeholders: the staff members, the pupils, the Governors and the pupils themselves. There was no sense of direction or alignment and this is reflected by the data presented in the previous Chapter. There was no real sense of purpose that was shared throughout the school. If this purpose was known, it was probably known only to the previous head teacher and chair of Governors.

STAGE	TITLE	DETAILS
1	Understand the organisation	Who are we? What do we stand for? What is we have to do and for whom?
2	Create a compelling vision	Where are we going and why? What is our aspiration?
3	Reinforce with strong values	How are we going to get there? What is the framework we need to put in place?
4	Communicate the message	Who needs to know what, when and how? How will we behave to model the values in action? How will people understand what we are about?
5	Embed within the organisational framework	How do we link our vision and values into everything we do?
6	Review the process	How do we ensure we revisit our vision and values to make sure we are still on track? What feedback mechanisms do we put in place?

Table 5.4 - The key stages of building the brand at the case study school

So, the first stage of the process has to be focussed on understanding what makes the school different. What gives it its unique sense of identity? All Primary schools are, in theory, there to perform the same function. And yet, each will have its own personality: what makes it unique in terms of style, focus and ethos.

In order to define it as a brand, this personality needs to be understood. An acknowledgement and understanding of this personality will also allow the purpose of the school to be defined. This purpose provides an indication about the functional role of the school that links to its personality. In the case study school this was reflected by the statement 'A happy, caring-faith community that develops the potential of every child'.

5.6.2 - Stage 2 – Create a compelling vision

Once the first stage has been completed, the development of the vision should be done in a way that reflects the personality of the school in a simple way. This is particularly true of a primary school because it is the vision that will be used as the guiding light for the rest of the development process. It should also be articulated in a simple way because the pupils will have to understand it as well all of the other key stakeholders. Simplicity is the key. A good example of simplicity in action is the vision used by Disney which is simply stated as 'Making people happy'. That statement represents everything they stand for as an organisation.

The importance of generating a vision that could be understood by the pupils cannot be stated strongly enough. It is easy to see the vision as purely the preserve of the management team or Board of Governors. In my opinion, for a vision to be effective, all of the key stakeholders need to understand and it and apply it. Managerial speak is useless for this; it is sometimes difficult for adults to understand and apply this! So, an acid test for the effectiveness of the vision is 'Do your pupils understand it?' In this case, it was as the data presented in the previous Chapter suggests that pupils could understand and engage with it at all levels in the school.

5.6.3 - Stage 3 – Reinforce with strong values

A vision gives a school its destination; the values should map out the journey about to be undertaken. Such values, again, should be simple in their articulation and must be limited in number. Davidson (ibid: 130) suggests that an organisation should have about five core values as any more than this becomes hard to remember. In our case study, it was agreed that there were indeed five core values that represented what the school really was about.

The values agreed upon should be done with consensus in mind as everyone has to live them. People need to understand them, agree with them and be able to apply them. They should not be a shopping list of idealistic words but provide a clear framework that will allow consistent decision making and application throughout the school. They must also link directly to the vision so there is a consistency of message.

5.6.4 - Stage 4 - Communicate the message

The key element of translating a vision into action is to make sure that there is a clear framework for making it 'live' on a daily basis. In a school scenario, this can be done via two processes. The first of these is to get the school staff some form of credo or Charter by which they will agree to behave. What are the rules or guidelines that they will adopt to make the vision a reality? This can only be done if they believe in the vision and if it is done using an inclusive approach. Everyone must be involved and the finished article must be agreed by the total staff. This may take time and several re-writes but it will mean that, at the end of the process, everyone is in agreement.

The second factor is how will the staff apply this in the classrooms? In the case study school, it was decided to do this via two aligned strategies. The first was to get pupils to write their own Charter at the beginning of the school year. How is it

that the children want to behave in line with the vision? This was then produced into a display and put on the wall in the classroom which meant it could be constantly referred to. The second process involved taking each of the elements of the vision (Trust, Respect and Love) and focussing on these in isolation each school term. Pupils took each theme and integrated them into a project during the term to understand it more fully.

Therefore, by the twin processes engaging both staff and pupils, a greater consistency of application of the vision can be obtained. It also means that everyone is engaged within the process which has a collective effect in terms of the ownership of it.

5.6.5 - Stage 5 - Embed within the organisational framework

The key aspect of this stage of the model, is that the vision must not be an isolated entity but must permeate every aspect of school life. It must be addressed and referred to in all of the key management aids of the school such as the school business or management plan. The case study school did this by listing within its Management Plan its three core objectives as bring focussed on making sure:

- The school operate in line with its vision.
- A positive learning environment is provided.
- All stakeholders are happy with performance of the school.

This gives a clear example of linking the vision into the everyday practices of the school. It could also be included into such documents as the School Evaluation Form or School Improvement Plan. Again, the case study school did this.

The alignment of the vision into everyday school practices has two distinct advantages. Firstly, it will provide measurable objectives by which the success of

the project can be gauged. Secondly, it demonstrates a commitment to action. The integration of the vision in this way means that the school is serious about its development and application.

Although this stage wasn't the direct focus of the research, it is vital to include this in the model of development produced as a result of the study. It would have been easy to have produced a template resultant from my study and left this aspect out. However, it is a key factor in the integration of the vision into everyday school life and subsequently has been included in this analysis.

5.6.6 - Stage 6 - Review the process

One of the key trends produced by the study was the importance of a longitudinal approach to this development process. All staff members agreed that to revisit the needs and requirements of the vision on a regular basis, discuss what was happening and compare areas of success and best practice was vital to its overall success. This led to a long term view being taken about the project and did not allow the initiative to fall by the wayside. Therefore, the final stage of the model has to be concerned with the review of it.

This can be done by using INSET days, whole staff meetings or localised Key Stage meetings. This can be related to a 'broken record' syndrome whereby there is a constant sound bite being heard over a long period of time. In this case, it is the discussion and focus onto the vision. Thus, this stage of the process supports the fact that a vision cannot be embedded into a school in terms of behavioural application in the short term. A 1-day training course will not do it. A vision, and subsequently, a brand will only be developed if the school engages with this process as a long term commitment that has no real end point. It will constantly be developed, refined and improved over a period of time.

5.7 - The consequence of this process

The net effect of this model in action, as demonstrated by the research data produced, is that the school will produce a continuous process that reinforces the brand of the school through the application of its vision. This process can be sub-divided into three main outputs. These are reflected in model 5.1 available overleaf.

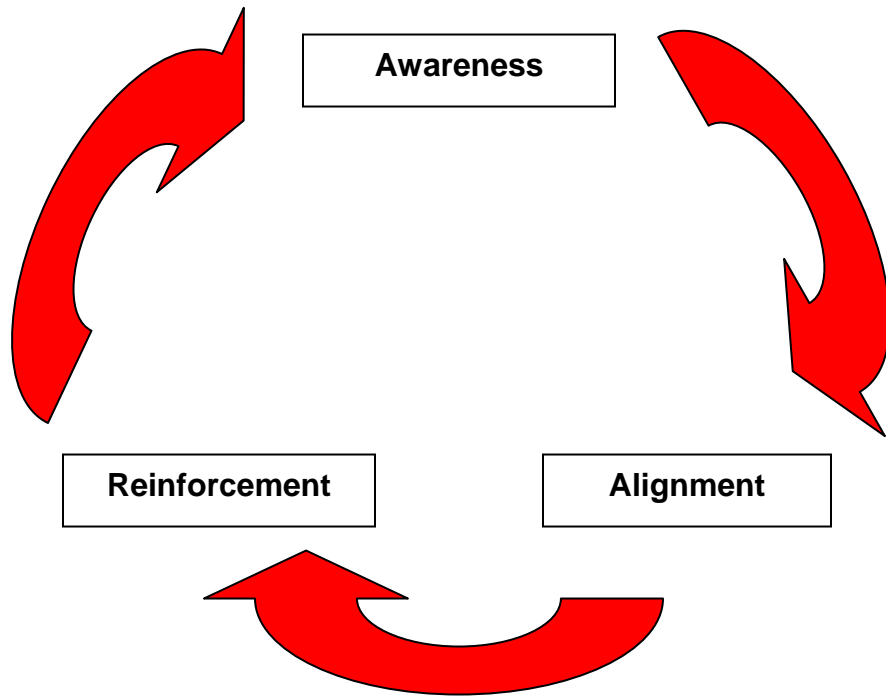
The first of these outputs is for the staff to become 'aware' of the main components of the brand. To do this they need to be involved in the process so that they can link it to their own experiences, beliefs and attitudes. People need to know what is happening and why. The second output involves the alignment of individuals to the process. By such alignment, individuals should become more motivated and engaged within the school framework. The final output is one of consistent reinforcement. By including the vision into all related school management documents, by revisiting and reviewing it consistently and by having public displays of the vision (and therefore the brand) throughout the school, the net effect will be consistently reinforced. Thus, anyone visiting the school will be able to ascertain what it is that's different about that school within a very short space of time. In essence, they will acknowledge the brand of the school and be able to link their own beliefs and attitudes to this.

5.8 - Conclusion

This chapter has presented the key trends and findings from the research. In summary, these key findings can be listed as:

- An effective vision is integral to the brand process.
- Inclusivity is vital as all stakeholders must be involved in the integration of the vision into the school.

- All stakeholders must understand the vision and must feel responsible for promoting and reinforcing it at every opportunity.
- The sustainability of the process can only be achieved by regular review and ongoing discussion.



Model 5.1 - The consequence of the branding process

The consequences of these elements have been discussed and, in short, have revealed that fact that the school staff within this case study feel more engaged with the school and, consequently, are more happy working in that environment. The school staff members also felt that the process has had an impact on the pupils in terms of improved behaviour and attitude.

Based on these findings I have been able to present a suggested model for the development of a brand within a school based on the successful development and application of its vision. Obviously, this is a fairly new concept and so it may be wise to stage some further research on the success of this model in other situations and schools. It is based, at this moment in time, on purely the actions and consequences of the research conducted in the case study school. Every school is unique in its own way and so, perhaps, the process used should be as well. However, this development provides a starting point for such a debate and whereas there was no guidance or ideas before this study, the development of this model presents a significant step forward in terms of how a school could develop in line with the needs of the new education market place.

6 - CONCLUSION

The overall aim of this study was quite simple and that was:

'To review how a school's vision creates its brand identity'

The aim was developed by combining my personal interests with a review of what was happening in the world of education and linking this with a connection with the commercial world. In short, this gave rise to a perceived need for schools to be presented with some ideas about how to survive in a market based system through a concentration on the concept of brand development. The Literature Review I conducted as part of this study suggested that schools did not know how to exist in the market based system created by successive Governments and their ability to market themselves to their key customer – parents – was not that well developed. It also suggested that parents, on the whole, were not that well-schooled in how to use this new market system to their advantage. This, as was seen in the Literature Review, was particularly true of those from lower socio-economic groups. Thus, my thoughts were that by linking what we know about brand into schools, parents should be identify with schools in a more positive way and make informed choices for their children that link their own personal values with those presented and reinforced by the school. This is the exact relationship that the commercial world seeks to make between itself as a company and its customers.

From the Literature Review conducted, it was also apparent that a study with this kind of focus had never been conducted before and thus, this study would open potentially up a new range of research potential in this field. The link to what is ostensibly 'best practice' in terms of commercial organisational development would be an interesting one and, by association, would have to create some form of new learning for the world of education.

To enable me to have more focus to my research, the research aim was broken down into four main objectives:

- To identify and explain the link between a school's vision and its operating ethos.
- To identify and explain a framework that makes a vision effective from a behavioural perspective.
- To identify and explain the effects of the process in terms of behavioural response.
- To identify and explain the impact of the vision on the school.

Thus, my focus from the outset was to link the managerial aspect of vision to the notion of brand. This was because most schools had heard of the concept of 'visions' and had, indeed, embraced this to some degree. What wasn't apparent was the degree of understanding of how such a vision could and should influence a school's operating ethos. In short, create a unique and definable brand for the school. This became the starting point for my research.

The research process I followed was an Action Research one. This was summarised in Chapter 3 of this study as an eight stage model presented by Cohen et al (2000: 235-237) which I adapted to link with a three-stage simplified strategy of Planning, Doing and Reviewing. This model gave my research a defined structure which I then followed closely.

Within the Planning phase, I firstly identified a problem to review. As previously discussed, this was done by linking the needs of the market-based education system in England (as reinforced by the 2005 Government White Paper on Education) to the situation in schools today. Upon review I decided that there was as a potential lack of understanding by schools about how to operate within such a system. Next I held a preliminary discussion with the key stakeholders within this context. This was done by liaising with a potential case study school

and getting understanding and agreement from them about the scope of my proposed project. Once support from of these agencies had been received, I moved onto my next challenge which was to conduct a Literature Review. This review allowed me to establish what had been before in this area of research and allow me to refine my research into a core aim and associated objectives. From this, I could move to the next stage which was to modify and refine my research into a more focussed rationale.

Then, I could move onto my Doing Phase which allowed me to select my research procedures for this study and define my evaluation procedures. Both of these aspects of the study are discussed in chapter 3 of this study. Then came the actual implementation of the project which was carried out between May 2005 and July 2006. The results of this study, linked to the aim and objectives of it, are detailed in chapter 4. Finally, the Review Stage rise to the interpretation of the data. This was the focus of chapter 5 of this study.

The analysis of the data generated by this study has allowed me to present a 6 stage model of brand development that could be used as a basis for further research or as a practical tool for schools in the future. In short though, my key findings from this study can be summarised into four main areas. The first is that the importance of an effective vision cannot be stated strongly enough. From my research, it would appear that some schools use a school vision in a loosely defined way or see it as an aspect of a head teacher's work that has to be done but do not actually understand the relevance or importance of it. A vision of a school should identify the very essence of that school. It is the external representation of that school's unique personality and it is the central light to which everything and everyone associated with the school needs to be aligned.

The second key aspect is that the vision needs to be articulated in as simple as way as possible. Everyone must be able to understand it to enable them to apply it. In Primary schools, the key learning within this context is that the simpler the

vision is, the easier it is to implement throughout the school. My inference from this research is that children in both Key Stages 1 and 2 need to be able to understand the vision, otherwise they won't be able to apply. A vision creates the brand identity of the school at one hand but also provides the behavioural framework by which all stakeholders in the school should live. Therefore, everyone must be able to understand it.

The third key finding is that the process for the integration of the vision needs to have four distinct qualities associated with it. It needs to involve everyone who it touches. The more involvement used in the process, the greater the support the process will enjoy. This process will also link to the second quality, that of cohesion. The process must aid the cohesion of the school in that everyone must understand the requirements of the vision so that they can apply with a shared focus. The third quality is that the approach must be longitudinal in nature. A 1-day workshop isn't enough; the development of a vision needs to be through an integrated approach that is revisited constantly throughout the year. Finally, the vision needs to be integrated into every aspect of school life. It cannot be a remote aspect of school life but must be included in the day to day management of the school in both formal and informal terms.

The fourth and final key learning involves the application of the process into the classroom. The research demonstrated that, when a vision is embraced in the classroom, it gives greater consistency of approach not just for staff but also for pupils. This focus helped the case study school improve the engagement of both school staff and pupils into the daily life of the school and also helped the teaching staff re-focus how they worked with children in the development of the pupil's social skills.

On a personal level, it helped me affirm that the fact that schools could redefine their operating style in line with the requirements of the market based system provided they were given sufficient help and support to do this. The case study

school was far better equipped with these requirements because they now had their own unique brand which was helping them attract and retain the children of parents not just in their immediate catchment area but in other areas. They were already getting requests from parents of children in other schools who wanted to change school because they had heard that this school was so good. One of the key reasons given was the way that the school operated.

The study also helped me as a practitioner. At the start of the study I had no idea how it was going to develop. The plan evolved with the study and I learnt many things about human nature in relation to brands along the way. Enough probably for at least two other research papers! What was key, though, was recognising the fact that in this instance many of the skills, attitudes and beliefs to make this process were already contained within the school. The trick was how to do this in a positive way so that change was a positive thing; that, in addition to all of the other pressures that school staff have to endure.

As a final thought, I started this study by saying that the school was somewhat average and that its SATS results were not reflective of a high performing school. In August 2006, when that years SATs results had been released the school had moved from 47th in its local league table to 10th. It became the second best Catholic primary school in the area from 5th. Finally, its key scores had progressed as represented by table 6.1 overleaf.

Although the scores aren't directly linked to the study and there will be numerous factors associated with their dramatic increase, they make interesting reading and demonstrate the fact that, at the end of the study, the school felt itself to be a successful, enjoyable and dynamic place to work.

SATs AREA	% SCORE 2005	% SCORE 2006
Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 in English	68%	87%
Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 in Mathematics	68%	85%
Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 in Science	85%	90%

Table 6.1 - Comparative analysis of SATs score at case study school (2005-2006) (data generated by LEA website)

Further research

At the close of this research there are numerous ideas of how to develop this first stage of research. Within the case study school, these ideas include a study into the effect the vision has had on both parents and pupils within the school. What is the impact and how do they view its importance and function? Also, it would be interesting to see how the vision is influencing the school at the end of 2007 to ascertain how the vision is still being lived, if indeed, it is. My continued relationship with the school would suggest that this is still the case but I would be interested in quantifying this and find what the school has done of its own volition to affect this.

Another research idea would be to try to engage another school into a brand development process based on the model presented within this study. By this process, the model could be challenged, refined and developed and this may increase the robustness of it as a process.

Due to the fact that this area of research is so new anything produced subsequently to this study will have to help in the development of it as a subject

matter. As I end this study, however, I now know that the first tentative steps have been made in this area and, hopefully, this will open the door for further research at a later date.

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